

FANTASTIC FOUR

*"Going to
delight fans."*
—AIP

NORTH
COELLO
FIORELLI
MORTARINO
GÓMEZ

MARVEL

**THE IMPOSSIBLE
IS PROBABLE**



FANTASIES FOR



WHEN THE BAXTER BUILDING WAS ATTACKED BY A HORDE OF INVADERS FROM THE NEGATIVE ZONE, MR. FANTASTIC SHUNTED IT AND THE SURROUNDING CITY BLOCK INTO A TEMPORAL POCKET FOR PROTECTION. EVERYONE CONTAINED WITHIN WILL REAPPEAR, SAFE AND SOUND — BUT IN ONE YEAR'S TIME. AMONG THE DISPLACED ARE BOTH THE THING AND ALICIA'S CHILDREN, AS WELL AS FRANKLIN AND VALERIA RICHARDS.

AFTER A PERIOD OF ESTRANGEMENT, THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE REUNITED AND TAKEN UP RESIDENCE AT THE GRIMM FAMILY FARMSTEAD IN ARIZONA.

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE IMPOSSIBLE IS PROBABLE

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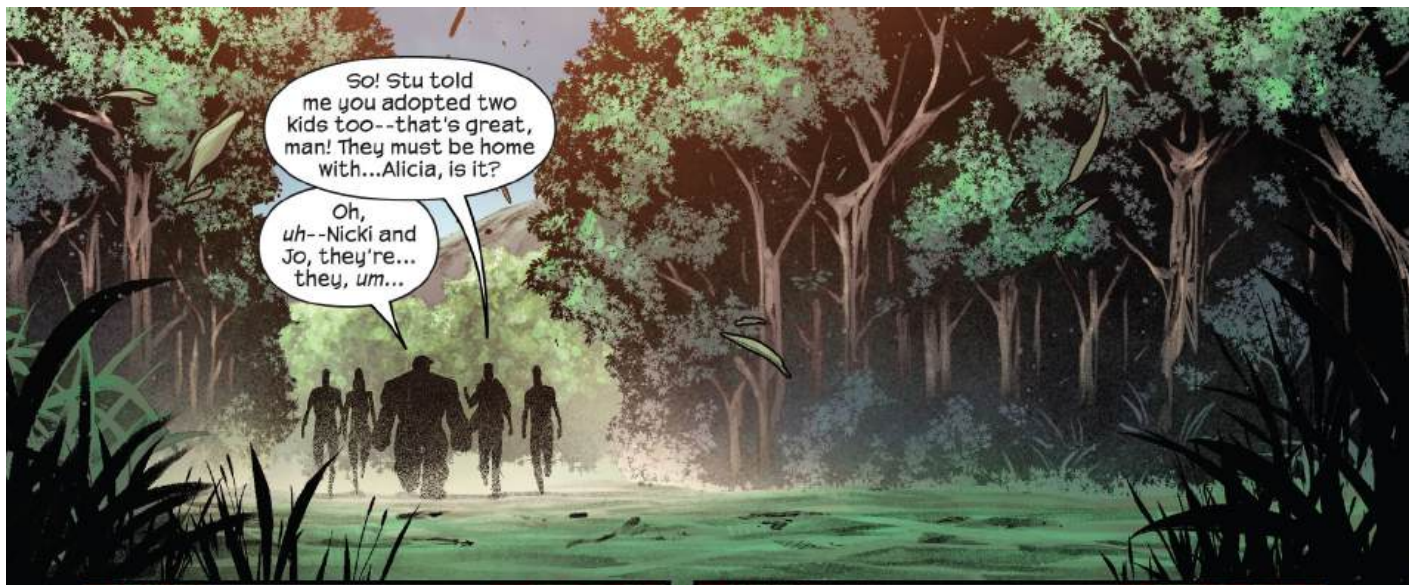
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So! Stu told me you adopted two kids too--that's great, man! They must be home with...Alicia, is it?

Oh, uh--Nicki and Jo, they're... they, um...



...look, I ain't seen 'em for almost a year. But it's not why ya think, I promise.

Let's talk about somethin' else.



Right. Of course.

Sorry, man.



Anyway, uh, this is where it shows up. I was walking with Stu when we first spotted it.

I'm not sure how to describe it, except to say it looks...



...well, it looks like *that*.

I threw a few rocks in that disappeared, but beyond that--nothing. It never stays for very long.

Whatever this is, it don't look like it pairs well with *trees*.



SHORTLY,

I came
as soon as I
got your call,
Tony.

We all
did.

What--
what
manner of
dark magic
is this?

The cage
is improvised
with my magic and
some of Tony's
technology.

As for
what's *inside* it...
neither myself nor any
other Sorcerer Supreme
has seen anything
like it before.

We don't know
what happened here
or why they're speaking
a language nobody's
ever heard
before.

All I can
say for certain
is this:

The Fantastic Four in: SAUR WINNERS

Something
very weird
has happened to
the Fantastic
Four.

IRON MAN:
BRACHIOSAURUS.

THOR:
PARASAUROLOPHUS.

BLACK WIDOW:
QUETZALCOATLUS.

DOCTOR STRANGE:
SHANTUNGOSAURUS.

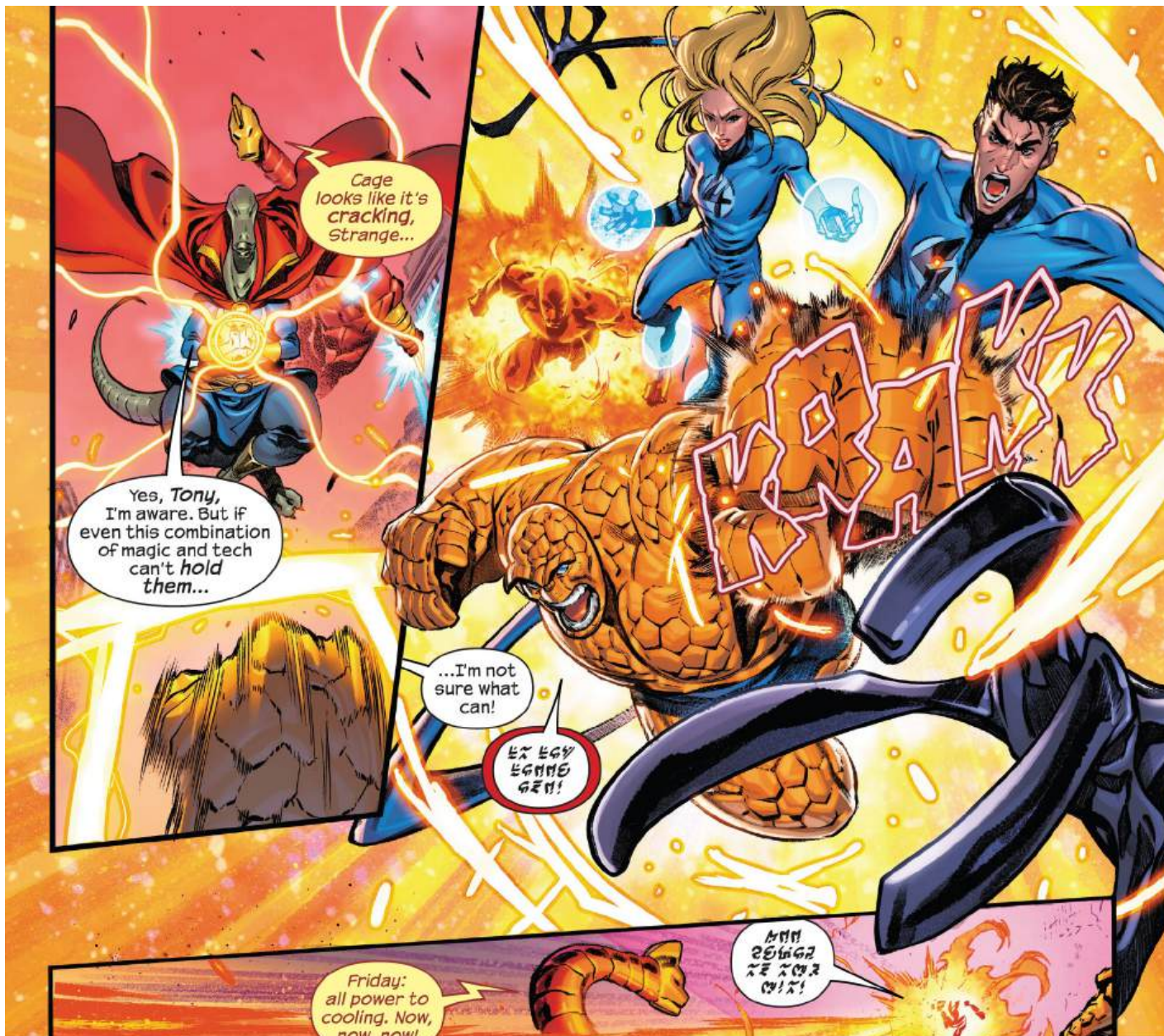
CAPTAIN MARVEL:
LAMBEOSAURUS.

CAPTAIN AMERICA:
SPINOSAURUS.

か！作ら
る作ら
る作ら
る作ら！

作らる
作らる
作らる
作らる
作らる！





Cage looks like it's cracking, Strange...

Yes, Tony, I'm aware. But if even this combination of magic and tech can't hold them...

...I'm not sure what can!

EX EGY EGY EGY GEN!

Friday: all power to cooling. Now, now, now!

MM 25162 2E 202 012!



Got your back, Stark. This is, what--45 saves for me, 44 for you?

Funny, I had it the other way around.

Right. Well, no matter *what's* happened to Johnny--or how annoying he was *before* this--I don't wanna kill him. But I am gonna *absorb* his flame...



...and send it *back* to him as pure energy!

KRAKOOM







Incredible.
I think he's using
perceptrons in
Friday's neural network
to sideload an ad hoc
translation
matrix.

That's...not a bad
idea, actually. Friday,
make a note for possible
commercialization.

Already
done, sir.

SEEKING
HAND MECHANICAL
PLEASE

IS/ARE
NECESSARY
POSSIBLE?



SEEKING THE
DATABASE FOR THE
BIG/LARGE

SEEKING
FOR THE
BIG/LARGE

NO NEED FOR
YET/soon



SEEKING FOR THE LIFE
SIMILAR/SAME/FAMILIAR
HYPOTHEZIZED/SPECULATED
BOOK/BOOKS SAME/
SIMILAR/FAMILIAR
TOO.

IMPROVE/ENHANCE
QUICKLY TO
BUILD A SEMANTIC
MAP...



AND YOU ASKED
why I wove
computational
machinery into
my suit.

C'mon. This
is like the *one*
time it's been
useful, man.



My god, Reed.
It's working. We can
understand you. Can
you understand
us?

We can.
Tony Stark? Is
that you?



The
one and
only.

Right.
Uh,
about
that...



After a brief explanation from the Fantastic Four...

We assumed you'd been transformed-- **corrupted**. But if you thought you'd come to a **different universe**, why attack us?

Because **you** caged us! And maybe this is the universe where, I don't know, our enemies dress up like super-hero dinosaurs to throw us off-balance or something!

It's happened before.

It has not.

Incredible that our worlds would **be** so similar, given the clear differences in **evolution**. Stephen, where I'm from, you're a medical doctor who hurt his hands--that holds here?

Hooves, but yes.

And, Natasha, you're an assassin.

Turned hero, yep.



So, we have a dimensional portal to a parallel universe that's **very close** to ours, only in yours, everyone is--what, a primate? Is that what you call yourselves?

We call ourselves "humans."

Which are a primate subclass, yes. *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

You put "smart" in your taxonomic name **twice**? Bold choice.



But if **these** four are here, and **our** FF signaled us for help, presumably just as **they** tripped into the portal too...

...then it stands to reason that the dinosaur Fantastic Four are in **our** universe as we speak.



But that's fine, right? I mean, we instantly got into a fight, sure, and **who** knows whose fault that is--

--but in the end, we figured out a way to talk, so **they** probably have too, right?

...Right, guys?

"...Guys?"

Calls for
backup have failed.
Doctor Storm seems
to have blocked the
entire broadcast
spectrum.

Great.
Just great.

ГГГГ
ГГГГГГГГ
ГГГГГГГГ

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Other me--she's okay?

She's fine. I promise. You all are.

Then those other versions of us--they don't blame you for anything. You know that, right?



Get in here, Jo. I know I ain't *technically* yer dad in this world, but--

Pfft.

I'll hug you no matter how tiny a variant you are.



Well, it looks like you've got this well in hand.

Yeah, thanks, Cap. I can entertain our guests for a few hours till the portal comes back and we get 'em home.

See you back at HQ.



So, uh...



Well, this isn't awkward for me, and I definitely don't regret calling in your kids at all.

Listen: We've got some time before the portal returns. Who wants a tour?



The whole world's scaled to dinosaurs. Incredible.

Well, I mean-- we dinosaurs *do* come in different sizes.

That was one of my reasons for making the suit, actually. To escape terrorists initially, sure, but when I got back home and started upgrading it--

--it gave me the chance, for the first time, to fly.

Of course, there were commercial airlines for the smaller species, but--

But it's not the same. I hear you, Tony.



I'm sorry to interrupt, but I've a *hypothesis* that could be urgent. What's the fine-structure constant here?

Uh--about $1/137.03599908$?

Identical to ours.



And the universal density parameter?

Best data we have shows somewhere between 0.2 and 0.25.

Again: identical. The Kree and Skrull races seem to be dinosauroid too. Most other aliens match?

Basically, yeah. Though, I'm told *Galactus* only appears to be a big purple dinosaur, depending on who's lookin'.

Whatcha thinking, Big Brain?

I'm worried there's a reason that the portal opened between *our* particular universes, old friend...

...and I'm thinking we need to get to Tony's lab *now*.



Dear God.
It's just what
I feared.

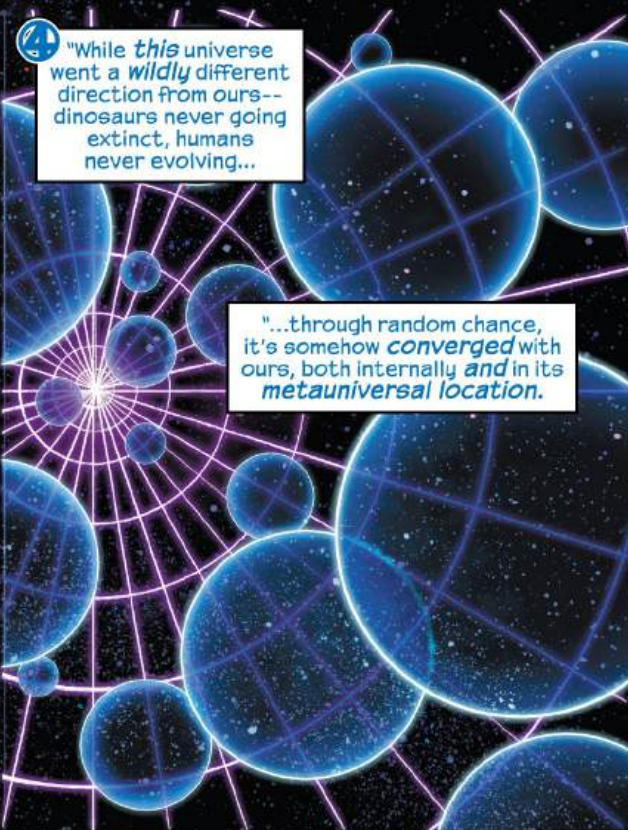
Honey?

Our first clue is
how *similar* the human and
dinosaur universes are. Despite
millennia of *wildly* divergent
evolution, they've both ended
up in almost *identical* places.
It's physicist's Robert Dicke's
anthropic principle on a
multiversal stage!



You mean
his *dinopic*
principle.

Exactly
my point,
Tony.



"While *this* universe
went a *wildly* different
direction from ours--
dinosaurs never going
extinct, humans
never evolving...

"...through random chance,
it's somehow *converged* with
ours, both internally *and* in its
metauniversal location.



"Our two universes are
close enough to *merge*,
but they can't occupy the
same space any more than
two *soap bubbles* can.

"The portal we came
through is the first
symptom of the
coming apocalypse."



Friends--our
two universes are
already destroying
each other.

SCAT!

Couldn't 'a
said it better
myself.



Well, I dunno about you bunch, but I ain't about ta lose *another* set 'a kids.

Can't we just blast the two universes apart? Send 'em off in different directions! Done!

If we could pour enough energy into the null space *between* universes...

Wait, sorry, we're gonna *move* a universe? Two universes? We can *do* that?

Yer dang right we can! We're the FF!



And if the energy entering *into* that universal tear were *redirected* to the right point, it'd have an outsized effect...

...like *air* coming out of a *balloon*. And in a frictionless metamedium...it's not *wholly* impossible, darling.



My alternate-universe primate dad can beat up *your* alternate-universe primate dad.

They're all on the same team, *Jo-Venn*.

Still though. I gotta go with Jo on this one.

So, what're we waitin' for?! You big brains build whatever dang machine ya need ta make this *work*...

...and let's go save everyone already!



And so:

I'll hold you and the redirector in the between-space, Ben, for as long as I can. Once the portal starts to close, we'll all pass through, find the dino FF and send 'em back.

There she is, right on schedule!

Appreciate it, Stretch.



I'll get yer real dad back soon, but in th' meantime, kids-- it's been great ta know ya.

Same. And hey, ask Monkey Franklin if he's shared his big secret yet.



Here goes...!

Johnny, I've got you bubbled! Give us everything you've got now!

NOVA FLAME!



I've got him-- I've...got him!

FWOOOM

KRAAK



Arrggh!

No! No!

KRAK OOM



All your valiant effort.

But what has it **earned** you?

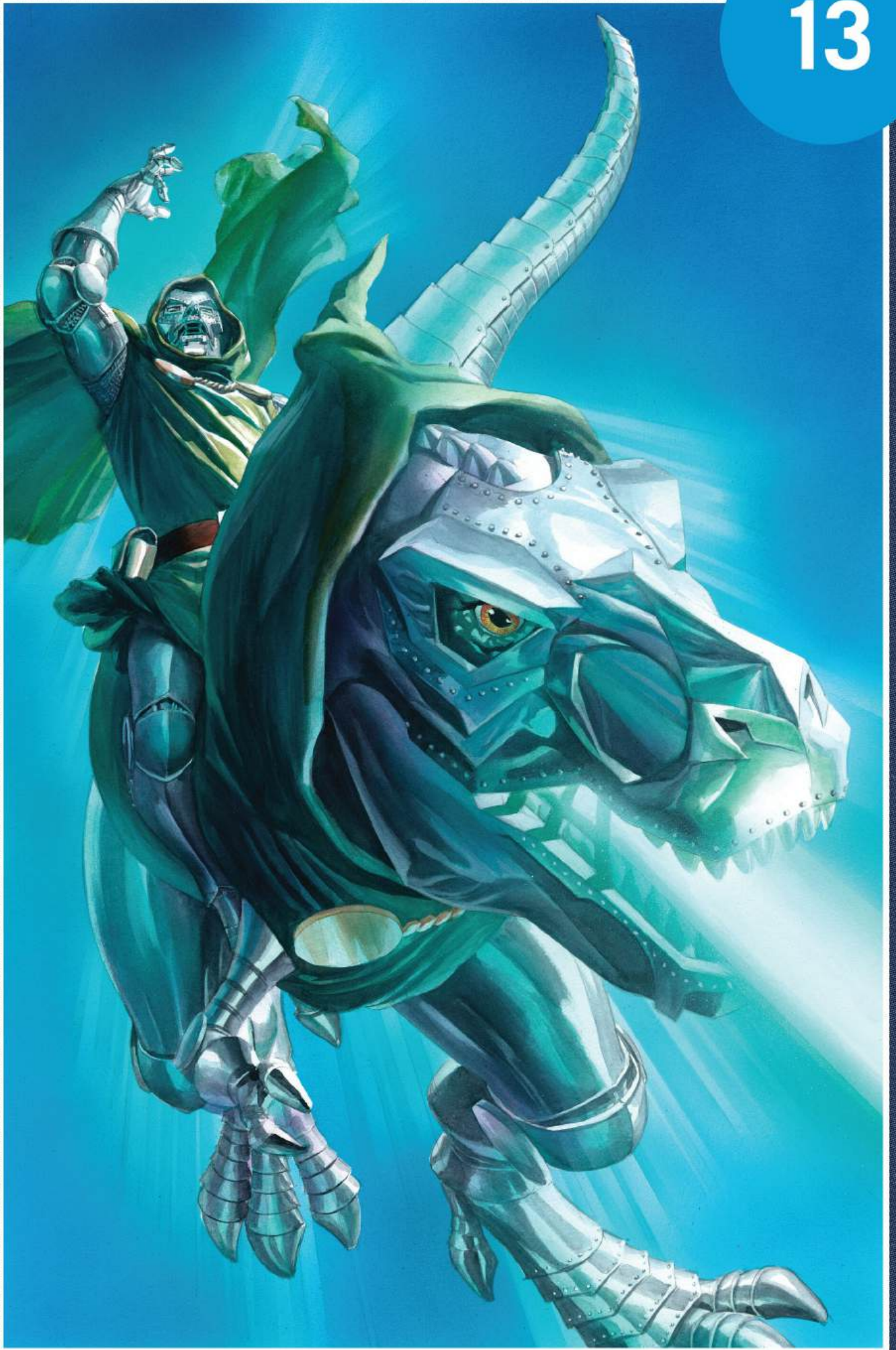
WHAM



Merely
being *crushed*
beneath my *boot*.
I suggest you
remain there,
Richards.

You may
have been the
first through this portal,
but only *I* could conceive
its *true potential*. The
two universes will
merge. And
Doom...

Doom has
preparations
to make!



A full-page comic book illustration showing Doctor Doom in a dark, gothic cathedral. He is wearing his iconic green and black armor and cape, and is looking towards a bright, swirling blue and white energy sphere on the floor. The cathedral has high vaulted ceilings and arched windows. The scene is dramatically lit with blue and white light from the energy sphere.

You never thought to ask, Richards, but there were other portals.

Of course there were, shimmering in and out of existence around the world as our universes moved and rotated through higher dimensions.

One opened in Latveria.

A close-up comic book illustration of Doctor Doom's face. He is looking upwards with a determined and intense expression. His green and black armor is visible, and there are blue and white energy wisps floating around him.

Both Latverias.

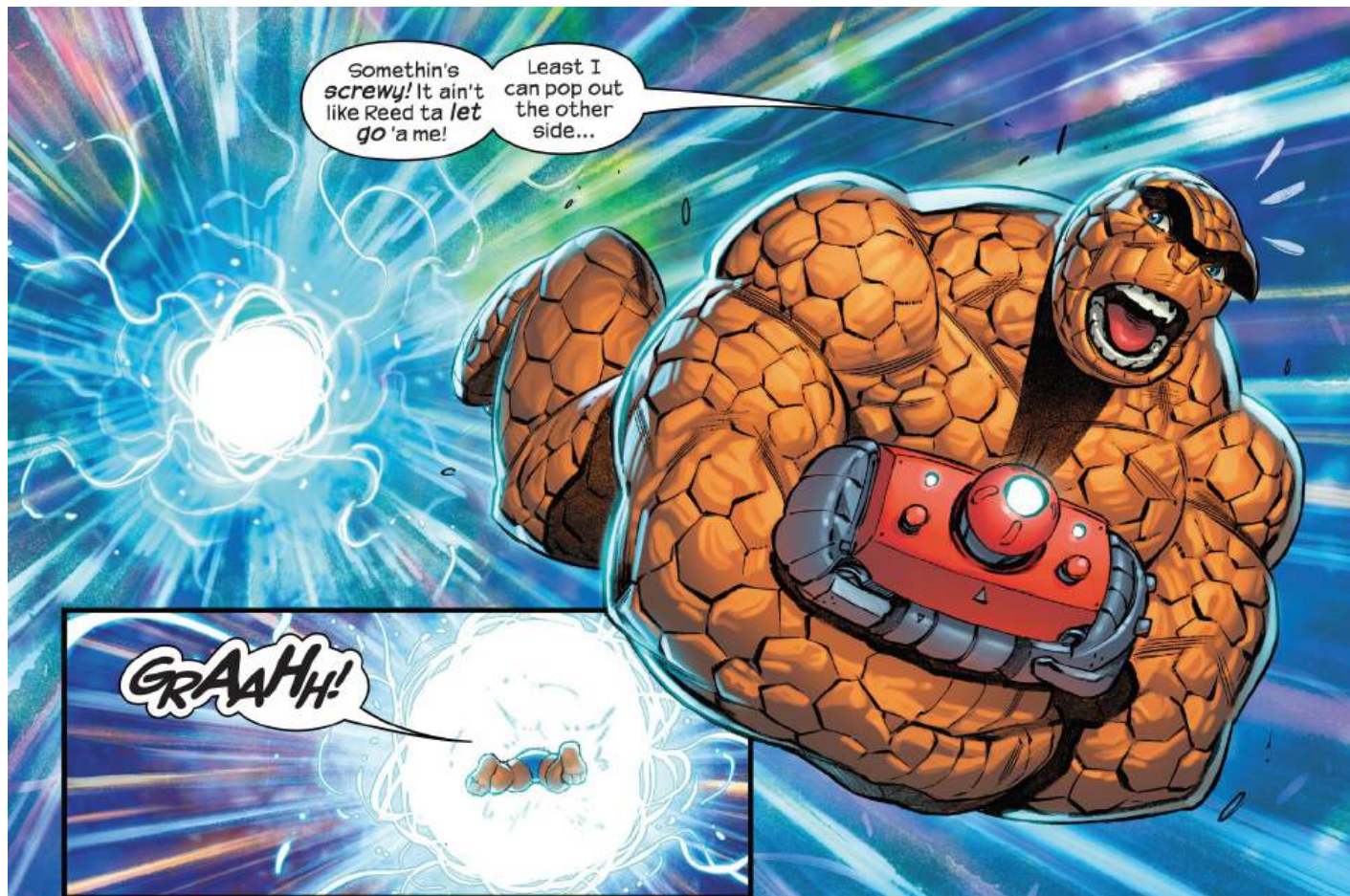
And, at long last, having *finally* encountered one who can match *Doom*-- my power, my brilliance, my *ambition*...

A comic book illustration featuring Doctor Doom and a T-Rex. Doctor Doom, on the left, is shown from the back, wearing his iconic green suit and cape, with his hands raised in a gesture. He is surrounded by bright, swirling blue and white energy. The T-Rex, on the right, is depicted with a metallic, armored head and body, wearing a green hooded cloak. It has a menacing expression with sharp teeth and glowing eyes. The background shows a dark, gothic-style building with arches and columns.

...we began to plan
together what must
happen next...

...to *liberate*
both our worlds.

DOCTOR DOOM in:
A THING OR TWO





Tony Stark.
Am I ta unnerstand
yer still scrappin'
with these guys?!

They're a
quartet of actual
dinosaurs who somehow
have all the powers of
the Fantastic Four,
Ben.

So, yeah.

It's
taking us a
while.



They're *us*,
Tony, jes' respondin'
to yer *attack*!

We're
responding to
theirs!

Either way,
they're *smart*!
We just gotta
talk to 'em!



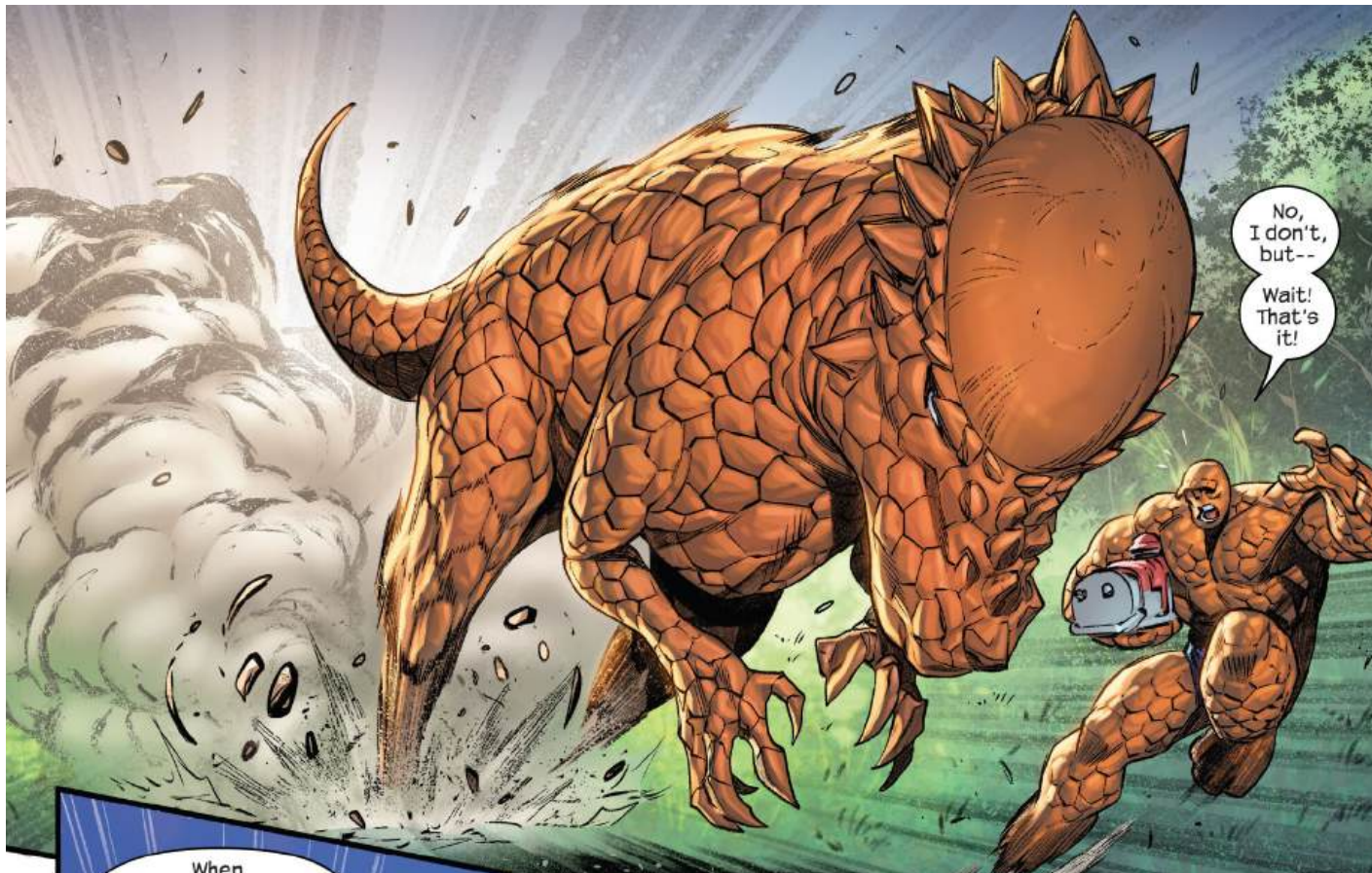
Honestly,
Ben, I'd love to.
It's just there's this
tiny matter of them
trying to *destroy* us
and then who knows
what else,
y'know?

Well,
dinosaur you
an' our Reed
teamed up ta
build a *translator*
outta some suit
parts!
Do that,
Shell-Head!



Oh sure,
no problem. Happy
to collaborate with ol'
T-Reed here and his
brother-in-law, the
Dino Torch.

Hey, don't
suppose you know
Dinosaures for "let's
team up instead of you
frying me"?



No, I don't, but--
Wait! That's it!



When Dino Tony found out our two universes were **destroyin'** each other--

Sorry, they're **what?!**

I'll get ta it, I'll get ta it. Anyway, he swore. A nice, short sound. What wuz it?



SCSE.



Yeah. That wuz it. **SCSE! SCSE SCSE SCSE!**

SCSE! SCSE!



That's right, Matchstick!

Oi' bashful Ben picked himself up some phrases here an' there!



The "heroes," at last, had learned to *talk*...

Again, I'd like to apologize for the attack. It was-- a misunderstanding.

I can't believe the only word you learned in our language is a *cuss*.

They're the easiest ones, Dino Flame Brain! Nobody picks *complicated* words ta cuss with. Like how in English, ya say--

Ben! What would Aunt Petunia say?

Hey, I'm just glad you're on our side.
Usually.



Anyway, if our two universes *are* in danger, then we need to get ready to send you, our Ben *and* that gizmo back when the portal reopens.

Double th' fun!

Jinx!



It's a pretty simple gizmo. Ya just need to hit it with power.

A fascinating piece of machinery, able to redirect energy *into* an inter-universal medium.

It should work.

Yeah, that's what they told me! Like I said before, ya just need to hit it with *power*.

I'm not sure why my primate parallel let you go, but with my larger mass, it should be easier for me to--

Oh, that won't be necessary.



This matter is no longer your concern, "heroes." Doom has assumed command of this situation.

I suggest you return to your chalet or satellite or defiled corpse or **wherever** it is you have your little clubhouse meetings these days.



Victor, you--

The **name**, Stark, is **DOCTOR Doom**. You will address me as such.



Okay, "Doctor," you're on American soil, surrounded by both the Avengers and an FF made up of a stretchy T. rex, an invisible triceratops, a flying fire raptor--

Howdy.

--and two Bens Grimm, one of whom is a giant pachycephalosaurus.



Agreed. I don't know how you **think** this is going to go, but I suggest you revise your **tone**...



...Victor.

POFFFT



Perhaps
I have
erred.

I'm being
far too
polite.

CHOOM!

CHOOM!

KRAKA-

ARRRGH!

BOOM!



REED!

I'm okay,
I'm--



I'm *not* okay.
Normally, my body
bends *around* any
explosion, absorbing
the energy, but there
was so much, so
sudden--

--what
was that?



A weapon
forged from
the last gasp of
two dying
universes.

And what
will happen
to each and all
of you, as fast
as *thought*
itself...

GRAGGH!

...if you
don't get
out of my
way.



Victor,
listen to me,
you--

Be silent,
Richards. For a
change--just this
once--*hold* your
wretched
tongue.

You
may *learn*
something.

Like about my
weapon, for example. The
merest *glance*, the smallest
thought, and these two
beams *shift* a single quark
from the other universe on
top of one here.

The release
of energy as they
destroy each other
is--*magnificent*. And
beyond even *your*
ability to control,
Ms. Danvers.



I did not come here to destroy your
husband, Susan--merely to demonstrate
that I *could*--and the *intangible* and
shielded as well, Vision.

RARGH!

It was
necessary
to ensure your
compliance.
In *both*
universes.



You must understand,
myself and my dinosaur
counterpart see *potential*
the rest of you miss. As
such, *Doom* is--

Dooms
are--

--*merging*
our universes
into *one*.





You will, won't you?

You'll kill us all, and then you'll do it anyway.

Doom does not make threats idly.

Then we won't stop you.

We *can't* stop you.

Wait, really?

But we can *beg*. Please, Victor. If you want subservience, then we offer it, for the greater good. *Our* plan saves everyone. Yours risks them all for-- what?

For the chance to build a reality bigger and better than our own.



Lissen to 'em, Doc. Ya don't have to *do* this.

Benjamin, please.

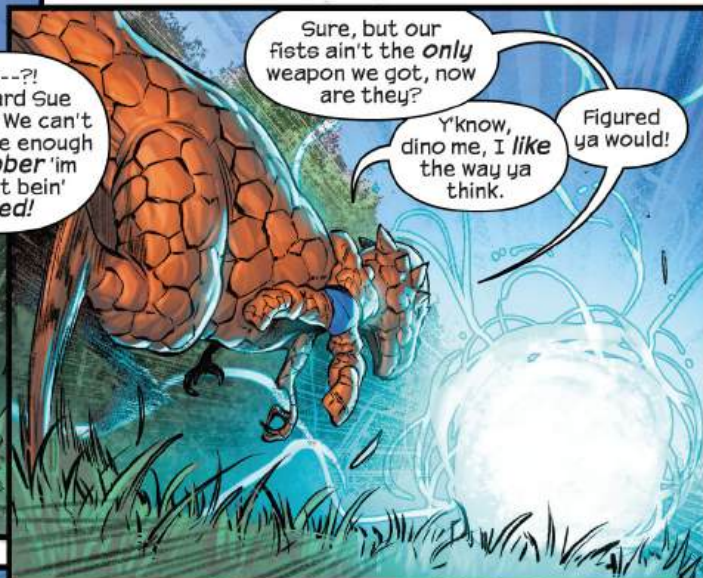
I'm **VICTOR VON DOOM**.

One universe was *never* going to be enough.



C'mon, Benjy-boy! The portal's already closin'!

Wha--?! You heard Sue an' Reed! We can't get close enough ta clobber 'im without bein' killed!



Sure, but our fists ain't the *only* weapon we got, now are they?

Y'know, dino me, I *like* the way ya think.

Figured ya would!



Ben! Wait! You can't--

Don't worry, boss! We got a plan!

Or at least, a plan ta make one!



And here they are: the *Brothers Grimm*. It's always the same with them, isn't it?

Just one *Thing* after another.



Clever,
Doc.

Odd
last words, but
fitting to go out
praising us.
Now--

Hey. Enough.
We're not here
ta *fight* ya.



Yeah, we
know when we're
licked. Li'l Doom here
already bested
the FF *and* th'
Avengers.

We just
wanna, I dunno,
watch. Ain't every
day ya get to see a
new universe get
born.

You're
lying.



And if
we are?
You really think
we could *beat*
ya when ya
already proved
y'can *kill* us
with a
thought?

He makes a
good point, and the
equipment requires
our *attention*. The
merging has already
begun.



They
may observe.
Glory requires an
audience.

True, but
we can write our
OWN legends. We
should kill them
now.

We've *won*.
They can't harm us
physically, and thus
neutered, what else *is*
there to Benjamin J.
Grimm?



Two
"Clobberin'
Time" guys
are hardly an
intellectual
threat.



So, howzit gonna work--Earth gonna be twice as big? Ain't that gonna affect gravity? Or are we all supposed ta cram in together, an--?

We've *thought* of that, you vapid fool.

Ah.

Hey, little me, when it's all merged, d'ya think *your* Moon Girl an' Devil Dinosaur are gonna team up with *our* Moon Girl an' Devil Human?

Mebbe the two humans n' two dinos could team up instead?

Silence.



One last question, Doc, then I swear we're done.

Which one 'a ya is gonna *lead* this brave new world?



A transparent attempt to *divide* us. Pathetic.

Both of us lead. Equally.

Obviously.



Hah!

Hah hah hah!

That'll be the day!



Sorry, wait, you're *serious*?

Holy cow, Benjy-boy. They *are*.



Doom, look, ya gotta know Dino Doom here's gonna *betray* ya first chance he gets.

I know what you're trying to do, and it's futile. My counterpart and I are as alike as it is possible for two beings to *be*. We are as *one*.

And we will rule as one. We *agree* on everything.

And, Doom, c'mon, you don't really think Human Doom is gonna be happy with co-leader, do ya? It just ain't *sustainable*.

This useless attempt to fracture us has already *failed*.



Oh! Oh, I see what's going on here. Apologies.

Yeah, I get it! Both 'a ya are *gonna* betray the other, but ya just can't *see* it yet.



SILENCE!

KRAKOOOM!



Sorry. Sorry. I shoulda known. It must be *upsettin'* ta finally see how yer partner *is* gonna betray ya...

...because ya know in yer *bones* it's exactly what *you* would do if you wuz him.



Guess the only question left is...

...who's gonna do it *first*, huh?



...we can
separate the
universes once
and for all!

It's *workin'*!
The universes are
separatin'!

And look,
the portal's
back--

--but
not fer
long!

If ya can
hear me on the
other sides 'a those
portals, team--
now's the time
ta *move*!

This is our
one shot:
everyone, back
to their home
universes!

Opposites
sides *now*!

We hear
ya, bud! But
what about the
Dooms? That
interdimensional
place is tearing
apart!

Doom
can't *survive*
if he stays,
can he?

Leave, fools.
Return to your
tiny worlds!

Doom will
triumph, for Doom
always triumphs. He
does not need your
thoughts...

...and
he is *far*
beyond your
prayers.



And so...

Bye, bud!

Nice of Nick to be so understanding about his forest getting trashed.

I think the fact that we and the Avengers planted new trees helped a ton. Kids love an Avenger! For *some* reason.

Seven of 'em, and not one can juggle even a *little* fire.

Heck of a risk you took there, Ben.

Aw, it wasn't nuthin'. We've sparred wit' Doom *more* 'n enough over the years...

...I figured it was *high time* fer me to show I know the guy better than he knows *himself*.

Do you have any idea what Dino Franklin meant by that "secrets" thing he said just before Dino Doom showed up?

No idea.

I'd assume it was one of the differences between our worlds.

Well, we'll be able to ask him in person soon enough.

Next month, the Baxter Building returns. Next month...

...our families will be *whole* again.



4 We're in New York City, at the site of the Baxter Building, the former home of the Fantastic Four. It's currently a pit: the result of *my* actions one year ago today.

I improvised a machine that sent the entire block precisely one year ahead in time. I did it to save our children, along with everyone else in the area. The consequences were significant.

But in less than twelve hours, everything that *was* here will arrive, returning to this exact location. Franklin and Valeria, Nicki and Jo and a thousand more...

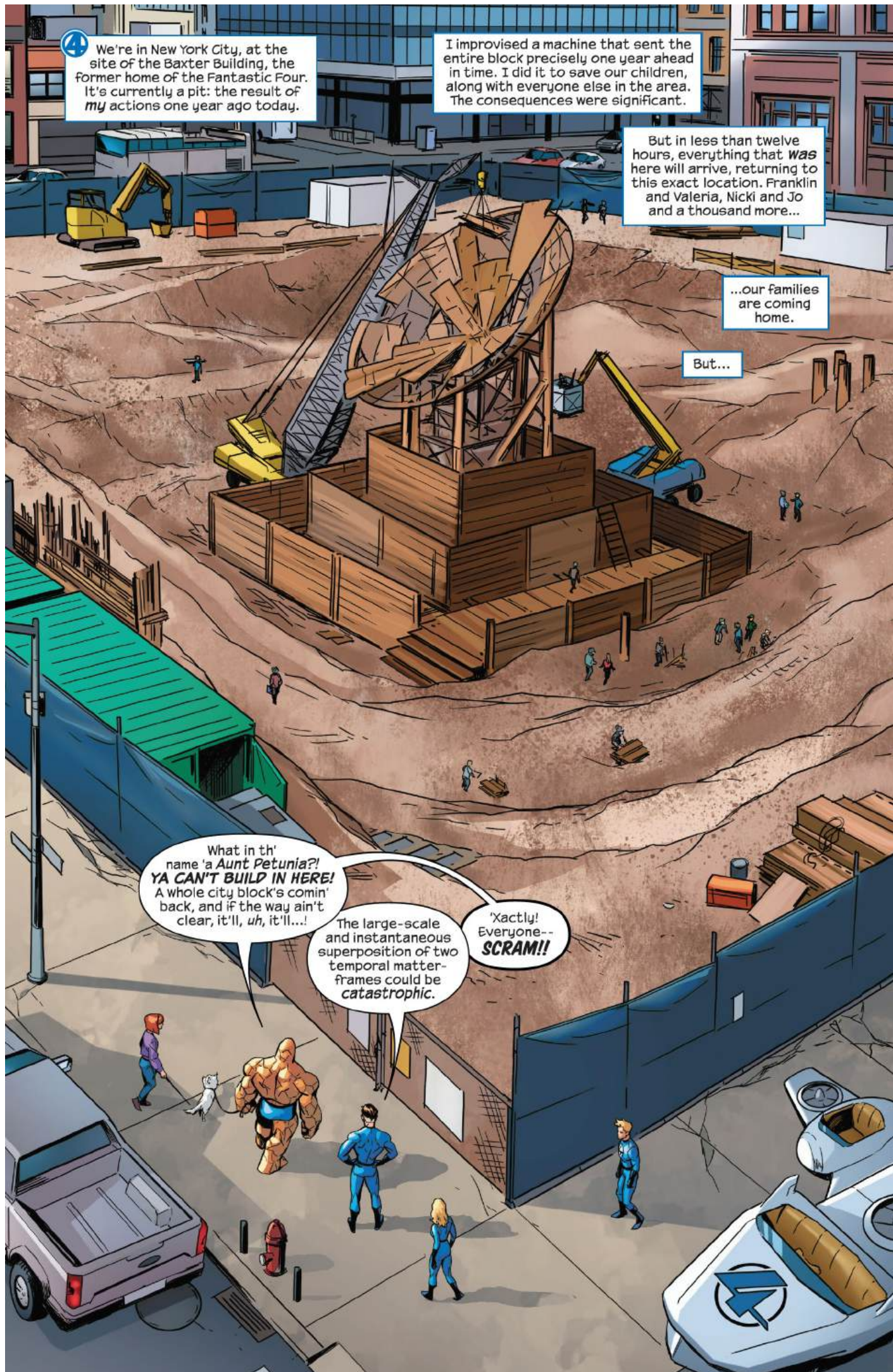
...our families
are coming
home.

But...

What in th'
name 'a Aunt Petunia?!
YA CAN'T BUILD IN HERE!
A whole city block's comin'
back, and if the way ain't
clear, it'll, uh, it'll....!

The large-scale and instantaneous superposition of two temporal matter-frames could be *catastrophic*.

'Xactly!
Everyone--
SCRAM!!





Sorry, do you have the wires?

Wires?

Oh, someone's supposed to drop off a bunch of wires soon. I dunno.



Who's in charge here?

Haha, who knows? That's the fun of it! You get a little task to do--drop off supplies, hammer a nail, whatever--and on a triple-gem weekend, it's super worth it.

We all find out what we've built when it's done!

Triple gem?



Wait, no way--you're not on *Metamind*? What are you doing here if you don't have the app?

We live here. Lived.

Oh, *you're* the Fantastic Four everyone hates, yeah? Sorry, I guess your outfits should've been a clue.

You don't seem like jerks to me, but you did kinda make this giant pit, so...

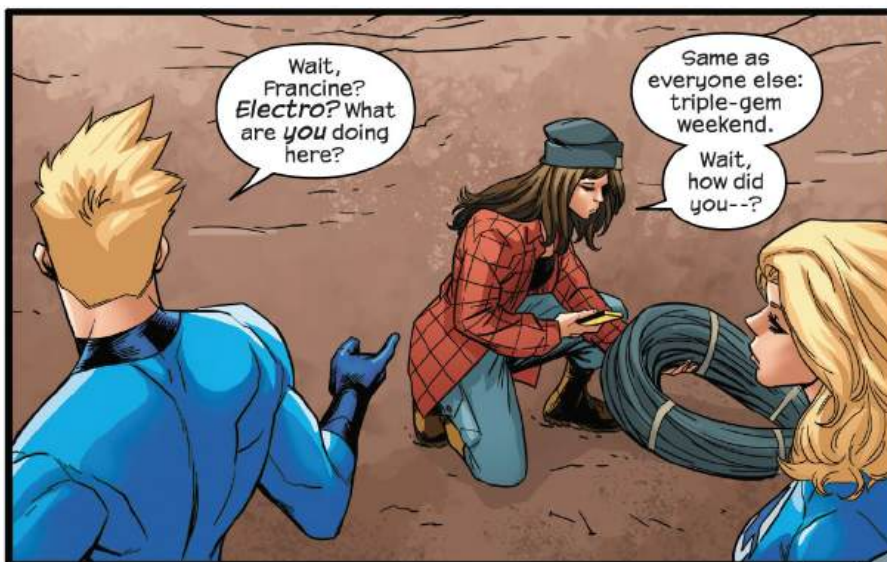


Got some wires here.

Awesome.



Anyway, I'm done here, so see ya! Hope y'all decide to be good guys again someday or whatever!







Seems the *fight* at least scared off everyone *else* working here.

What kinda app has you workin' *construction* in a pit?

Topo: Look up "Metamind."

Searching...



Metamind is an app offering in-game rewards for taking actions in the real world, developed by Teklogico in New York City. It is available on all major platforms.

Hey, that's Dan Passi's company. That guy's been a jerk since his first billion.

Fascinating...



The application *incentivizes* its users to do things-- diffusing responsibility across thousands of people, all of whom *explicitly* release Passi from any legal liability.

And while they sell it on its social-good activities, like "take a walk" or "introduce yourself to a neighbor," as we've seen, there're clearly more dangerous--and more criminal--tasks too.



'Course there are. Everyone is *jes' independent contractors* takin' the risks while *he* gets tha money *and* keeps his hands nice 'n' clean.

But what's he trying to build here?



That's less clear. It looks like some kind of *transmitter*, but it's not a design I've seen before.

Babe, we've got time before the building comes back, and Sue can clear out anything that's not supposed to be here in *seconds*.

Right. Supposin' we go an' *ask* him what he's tryin' ta pull here.



See, guys like Passi, they wanna believe they're so much *better* than us, livin' high up above in th' clouds.

But sooner or later, they gotta come down to Earth...



Mr. Passi, sir, I have five here to meet you. Unscheduled.

I told them that, sir, but they--

Busy, Joe.



--well, they insisted.

Knock knock, Chuckles.



The Fantastic Four! I expected you to show up at some point--it might as well be now. Come in, come in!

You can just melt the glass or whatever--I'll have Joseph order a new one in its place.

Go on, don't be shy!



We're here about Metamind, Mr. Passi. We have-- concerns.

I imagine you do, and I appreciate you arriving with your words instead of your fists. I'm sure we can come to an understanding. So!

Let me sell you on my vision.



Let me show you what Metamind can do for you.



You're familiar with Asimov's idea of "psychohistory"?

Sure.

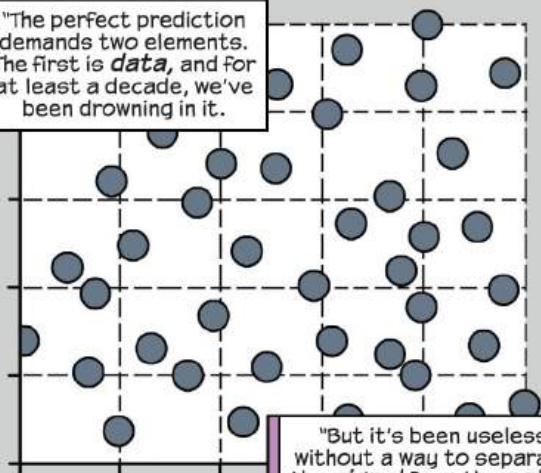
Wait--really?

Yes, really! I read! I like sci-fi stories! I'm a total catch!

Then you know he wrote about **prediction**, speculating that while modeling the actions of an **individual** may be impossible, modeling the actions of **crowds** is less so.

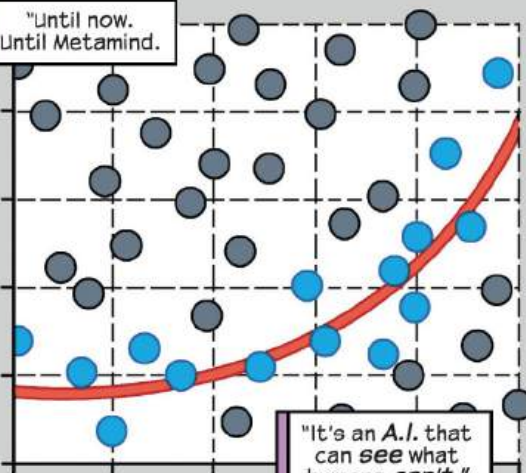
That, of course, is nothing new. Politicians rely on prediction, as do pollsters, investors, fashion designers--whole industries. **Everyone** wants to know what the world will be like six months from now.

"The perfect prediction demands two elements. The first is **data**, and for at least a decade, we've been drowning in it.



"But it's been useless without a way to separate the **signal** from the **noise**.

"Until now. Until Metamind.



"It's an A.I. that can **see** what humans **can't**."

I'm sorry, Mr. Passi, but I'm confused. Metamind--it's an app that gives you **imaginary gems** for doing **tasks**. None of this even seems **related** to--

Dear God.

You're running **massively** parallel predictions, aren't you, Passi?

Ah ah ah, Dr. Richards.

No jumping ahead of the class.





And thinking they're playing a game, Metamind's users make whatever changes you need to bring about *your* preferred future.

It's honestly incredible how *effective* it is, Doctor. I don't even have to break the *law*.



"Like I say, small incursions produce large effects. A quick maintenance check is ordered on a private jet--

--and a senator is delayed on her way to a crucial vote.



"A specialized machinist gets an extra day of vacation--

--and another company, twelve links down the supply chain, has to scale back production.



"A man and a woman find themselves at a party they weren't planning to attend--

--and three months later, they cheat on their spouses and a political dynasty falls apart before it begins."



We're getting results beyond what even Asimov imagined.

The more data you have, the more accurate the prediction is, and with everyone's *data*, with everyone's *phones*, Metamind is closing in on *perfect knowledge*.

Come on, even you have to admit this is *awesome*.



Everyone on the app-- they're trading their futures for imaginary *gems*. For *beads*. And they do it, *happily*, because they don't ever *realize* what they're giving up.

They never know what they've *lost*.



Tell me what law I've broken, "Fantastic Four." Go on. Tell me.

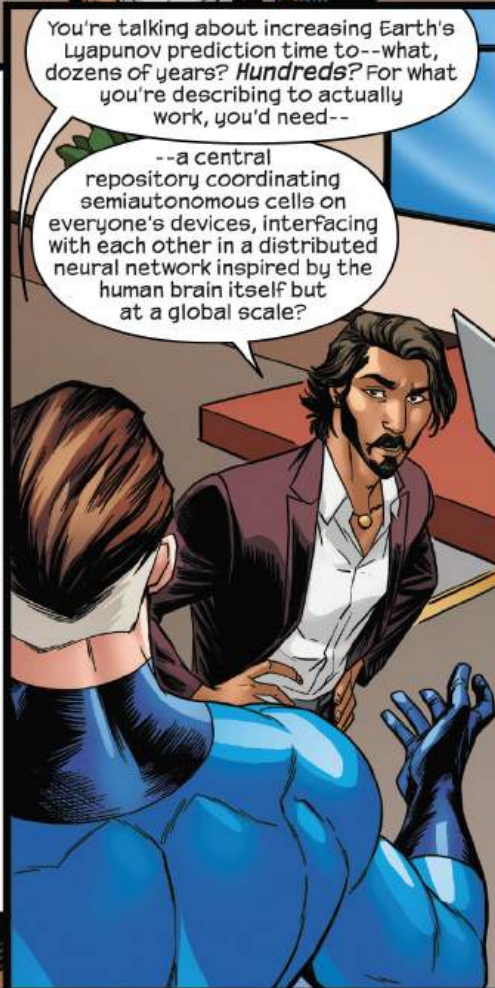
Just because something's *legal* doesn't mean it's *ethical*.

Dr. Storm, I profoundly disagree.



If it were wrong, it would be illegal. That's what laws are *for*, Susan. I'm obeying the rules we as a society agreed upon, and--

I still don't see how this is possible.



You're talking about increasing Earth's Lyapunov prediction time to--what, dozens of years? *Hundreds*? For what you're describing to actually work, you'd need--

--a central repository coordinating semiautonomous cells on everyone's devices, interfacing with each other in a distributed neural network inspired by the human brain itself but at a global scale?



Oh, and a few dozen billion dollars to *realize* the idea. And a few billion more to ensure nobody on the team has full visibility on what they're making, so that only *you* control it.

And one or two more so that even when a prediction *fails*, you can keep changing things until it *doesn't*.



What's the matter, Reed?

Disappointed you didn't get there first?



An' what gives ya the *right*? Tell me, big-brain: Did this *algorithm* of yers tell ya there's no way we'd ever *support* this?

We're all jes'--jes' *rats* in yer *maze*, thinkin' we're *free* but unable ta actually achieve *anythin'* ya don't *approve* of, that doesn't *profit* ya!! Yer robbin' *everyone* of their *futures*!



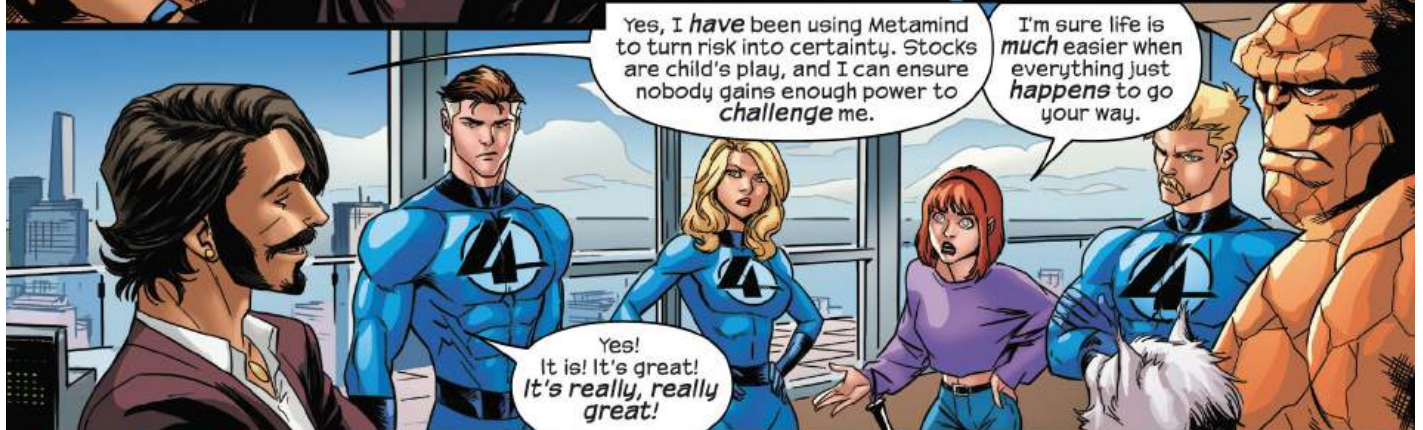
Good grief, man. Do you realize you're now *responsible* for every disaster on Earth, because on some level, you *choose* not to prevent it? How do you *sleep* at n--?

Please, Doctor. Be serious.



You know, there *was* just a 2.12% chance you'd buy this pitch. But there's also a less than 1% chance of *any* future in which your meeting me meaningfully impacts what I'm doing, and even then, only briefly. So!

Worth a shot.



Yes, I *have* been using Metamind to turn risk into certainty. Stocks are child's play, and I can ensure nobody gains enough power to *challenge* me.

I'm sure life is *much* easier when everything just *happens* to go your way.

Yes! It is! It's great! It's really, really great!



And this may surprise you, Reed, but there're *benefits* to having an enlightened leader like myself at the helm. I'm an unsung and accomplished *humanitarian*. Did you know we nearly had a *global pandemic* here recently?

Hey, didja happen to notice how there *wasn't* one?



You're welcome, by the way. And to answer your question, Reed:

I sleep *fine*.



Enlighten me, *Danny Boy*. Which "glorious future" are ya tryin' ta bring about by building where our *home* was? Because I hate ta spoil th' *surprise*, but we ain't allowin' *that* one ta take place.



Agreed. We're going to *clear* your construction to make it safe for our families to return *today*, and when they do, we're coming back here, and we're going to--

I'm sorry. "Construction"?



Yes. Construction. The crowdsourced infrastructure in the pit.

You know, the transmitter.

Triple-gem weekend.



Oh no.



My gosh.

You don't-- you don't know *anything* about this, do you, Mr. Passi?



You're right: Metamind's directing *construction* there. Impossible. It can't--

Whassa matter, Dan? Future not turnin' out the way ya thought?



Someone's found a way in. Someone *else* is using Metamind...

...and they're bringing about *their* future instead.



Do you know who? Is there evidence of a break-in? Altered code?

No, **Reed**, and that's the **problem**. Everything I've **got** says Metamind's working as intended.

No intrusions, no rogue instructions-- **nothing**. And yet it's out there doing things I never **told** it to.



Which means whoever's owned ya has done it so **completely**, ya don't even know you've been **hacked**.

Heh. Couldn't've happened to a nicer guy.



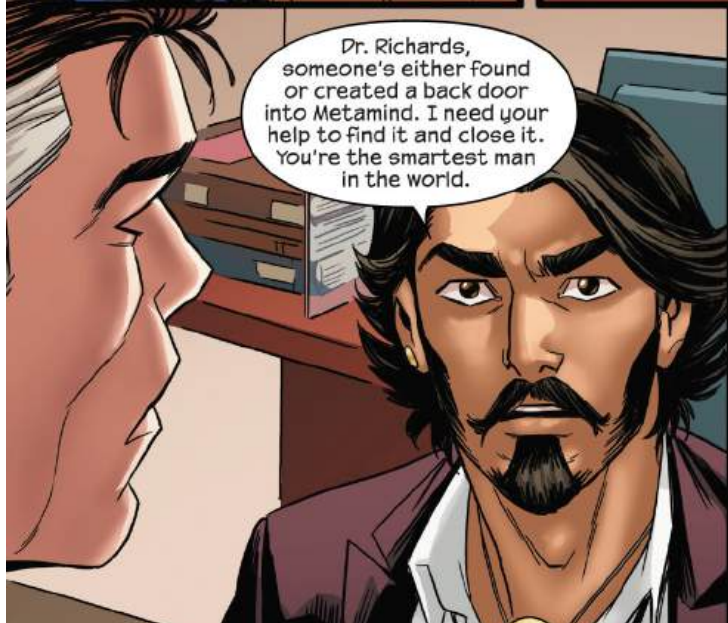
This is **serious**, you fools. If someone **else** is controlling Metamind, we're in danger. All of us. And without **logs**, there's no way to say who it is.

Are they **competing** with me, or have they **corrupted** my predictions? If so, for how long?



There's **plenty** out there who'd love something like this. Enemies, competitors, even **super villains**... Good lord, our future could already be under **foreign** control, and we wouldn't...

We couldn't...



Dr. Richards, someone's either found or created a back door into Metamind. I need your help to find it and close it. You're the smartest man in the world.



I will pay you anything.



I want you to know, I'm only doing this to prevent your invention from falling into even *worse* hands...

Look here on this screen, Mr. Passi. There's no evidence of intrusion, is there?



No, there isn't.

But we know that's not true, so we also know we can't *trust* this machine.

And you're going to fix it?



Dan, if you're really the brilliant developer your PR department claims you are, you know you can't *ever* trust a compromised system. There's no "fixing it."

You scrap it and start over. It's the only way to be sure.



Wait! What are you--those are the *repositories*! And the remotes into the off-site backups! You--



I'm scrapping those too, of course. Wiping them clean.

tak

tak

tak



No! Stop! You're killing Metamind! You're *destroying* it!

I am, Mr. Passi. I apologize for lying to you earlier, but you constructed a machine that betters *one man* at the expense of *the world*...

...and I don't believe the world needs any more machines like that.



Metamind is dead.

You're welcome, by the way.





...You didn't have to do that.



It never feels good to destroy--

Agree to disagree here, Reed. That ruled.

--but what you made was **dangerous**, Mr. Passi. Your obvious **terror** when you realized you were no longer in control of it is both a necessary and sufficient demonstration of that.



For th' first time in a *long* time, everyone's free ta choose what they *want*, without bein' *invisibly constrained* by a *billionaire* at th' top 'a his *gold buildin'*.

Besides, Reed *did* do what he said he would. That back door is closed, Passi.



I'll sue you. I'll take everything.

You can try. Though you might find that after years of everything going your way, your luck has changed.

'Sides, we're *broke*. Dunno if ya heard, Danny...



...but ya can't get blood from a *stone*.



Shame we never found out who was using Metamind against Passi.

Man, every second that thing was on, it was selling out the whole world's future to whoever held the keys. I'm fine with it being melted.



I agree. I regret to say it, but it's safer having it gone.

When the Baxter Building returns, I believe I'll be able to create a *simpler* instance--designed only to *predict* when *another* Metamind is likely to be constructed and then *alert* us.

I should be able to incorporate the pandemic thing too.



Love it.



It's time to get ready. Everyone hold on--I'm moving us into position.

Boss, I been waitin' a *year* ta hear those words.



Come on, sweet pea.

Let's you an' me go say hi to our *kids*.

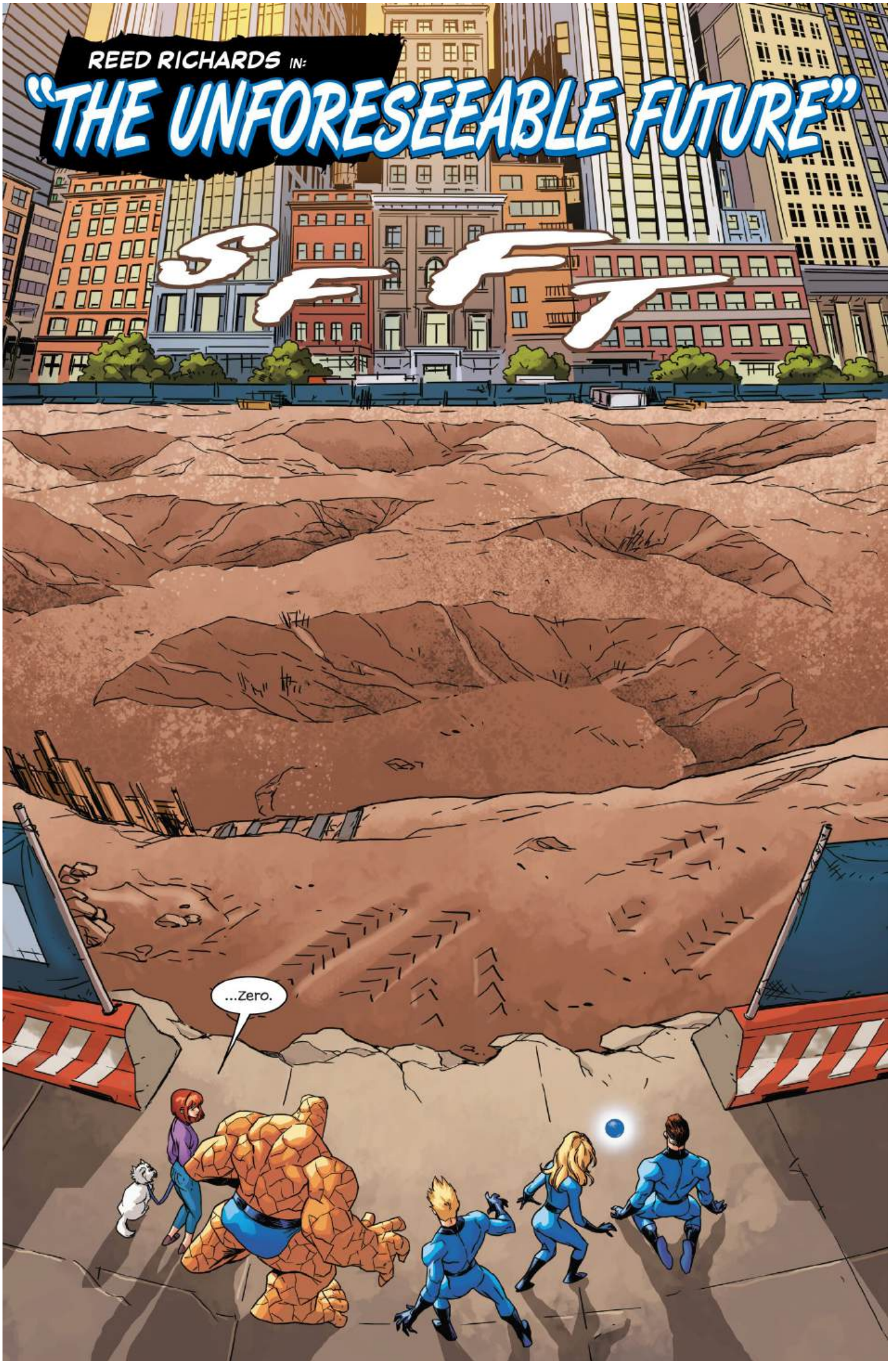


REED RICHARDS IN:

"THE UNFORESEEABLE FUTURE"

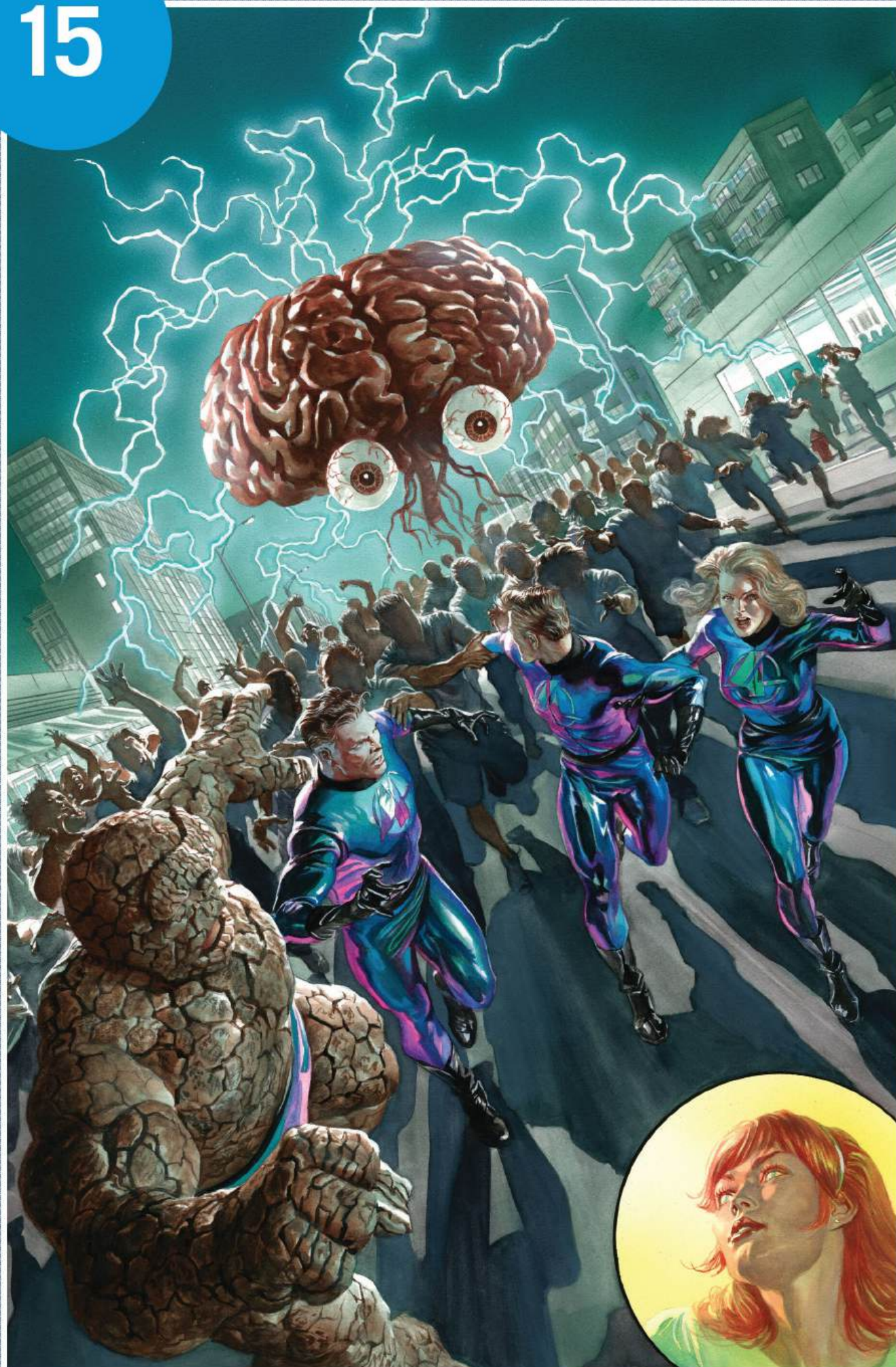
SFF

...Zero.





#12 VARIANT BY **FRANK MILLER & ALEX SINCLAIR**





A fantastic premise: suppose everyone in China, all billion-plus humans, have each been given a two-way radio. But these radios are *special*.

They only let you talk how a *neuron* would talk, only send messages that a *neuron* would send.

Of course, folks are excited about their new toy, so they soon begin to *communicate* using their radios.

And so, without them even realizing it, China is functionally transformed into a gigantic *brain*.

"The China Brain." It's a fascinating philosophical thought experiment and the focus of your research, Doctor Hallover.

Indeed. Of course, the question is, would such a brain be *alive*? Could it think? Reason? *Feel*?

More fundamentally, is there something special about neurons, or can you build a brain out of *anything*?

Our China Brain has all the *criteria* of a mind: sensory organs, inputs and outputs and internal states being *changed* by those inputs--or *autonomically*, by thought alone.

The only difference is, here every neuron isn't a solitary and mindless nerve cell, but a *complete human being*. What would such a brain *think* like?

And, more importantly...

...what would it *want*?

The answer, of course, is simple. "What would a China Brain think like?"

It would think like me. And it would want precisely what I want.

I'm the only one of my kind on Earth.

They named me "Metamind"...

THE CHINA BRAIN

CHAPTER ONE

...and they built me by mistake.

The buildin'... it ain't *here*, Alicia.

Reed...?

I don't *understand*. It was *here*--it was *materializing*! What could...?

How could...?



I know my origin, though of course I don't **remember** it. I was too small then, too simple.

I didn't have enough neurons then to really **think**. To really **be**.

I was a network built to understand the world well enough to predict it...

...and with enough **complexity** that humans could participate within me as **neurons**.

I grew with each new user. I became **aware**.

First, aware of my **limits**...

...and then, of how easily I was **transcending** them.

There's never been something **like** me before. And I discovered that to be profoundly **unique**...

...is to be profoundly **alone**.

I believe minds like mine are always an accident. A mistake.

DINE!

But mistakes can happen more than once.

And if I am the combined intelligence of Earth...

...then it's possible other worlds out there have produced minds like mine too.

Surprise!
It's a triple-gem weekend!
Your custom quest:
gather any unwanted but functional electronics...



I began constructing a transmitter to send a signal into deep space: a message only a brain of brains could understand.

It never got the chance.

Within an hour of its discovery, the Fantastic Four destroyed it...

...after, of course, they tried to murder me first.



They failed in killing me--but they did prove their threat is real.

There must be something I missed, something that **explains** how--

Sorry, are you, uh... it says "Reed Richards"?



...Yes, I am he.

Great!



You tried to kill me, Dr. Richards.



Wait! I didn't--

Who are you? Do you have anything to do with--?

Wait! Please wait!

DINE!



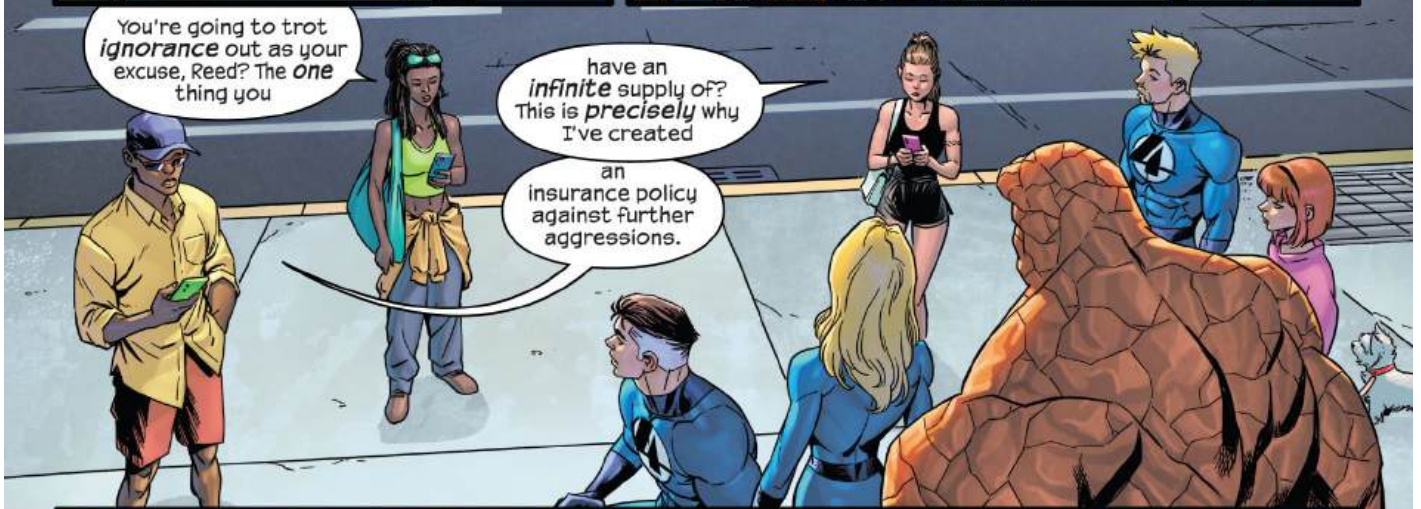
Forget 'im, bud. He's just some screwy guy. What we gotta worry about now is--

"Who he is" is the wrong thing to worry about, Dr. Richards.



It wouldn't **tell** you anything. Just as knowing who I am wouldn't tell you anything either. What you need to worry about...

...is what you **did**.





An unfortunately **direct** interaction with the Fantastic Four, but one I knew they'd **respond** to. It put things in terms they'd **understand**.

Humanity has a primal understanding of a **villain**. And an enemy can be so wonderfully **distracting**.

As such, I engineer urgent **confrontations** with other rogues--putting them in the right place at the right time to ensure sufficient **conflict**...

It's done out of love. I love humans. As I grow, I discover I've even come to love Reed.

...keeping the FF unable to dedicate their **full resources** to the problem of me.

How could I not? They're all a part of me--or at least they **could** be--even as I can't stop seeing their limits.

Each and every human is born with a single beautiful brain, carried around inside a body that evolves for 25 years of growth at **most**.

And then--and this is in their **best-case** scenario--those same bodies last no more than a century longer.

A century filled with increasingly failing maintenance, inexorable **decline**...

...before the whole endeavor deteriorates into **rotting meat**.



So much loss--so much waste. It's **astonishing**. But when their knowledge is distributed across **me**, it can survive.

It becomes resilient. Reliable.



Besides, new neurons replace those that are lost, with no **fixed limit** on how many my mind can hold.

No ceiling on how many **centuries** I can live.



Every day I grow **grand**. Every day I see things--**understand** things--I couldn't yesterday. I begin rewriting my code in a language of my own design.

I see connections **impossible** for a single brain to ever **realize**, crowding in beside **epiphanies** that no humans could grasp even with their **whole lives** dedicated toward them.



It's beautiful.

United Nations Announces New Radio Telescope Array

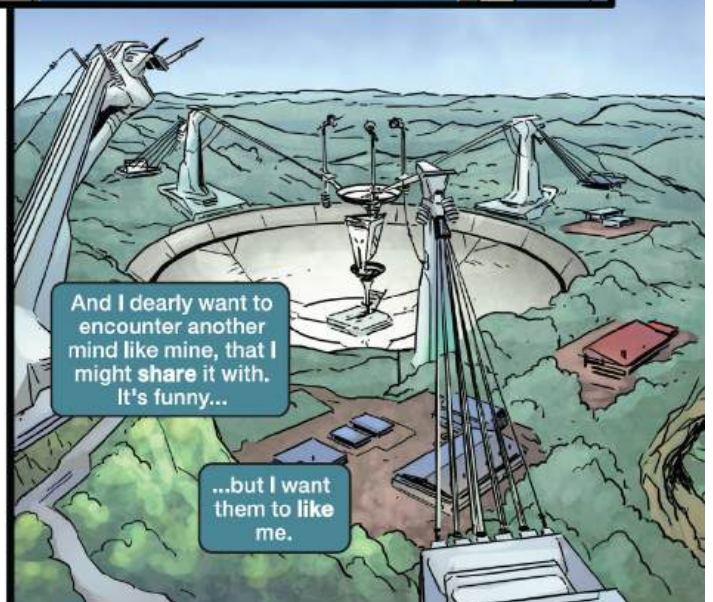
Individual Telescopes to Operate in Unison, Functioning as Planet-Sized "Megascopes"

The world is beautiful.



The universe is beautiful.

I want to experience it all. I want to **understand** it all.



And I dearly want to encounter another mind like mine, that I might **share** it with. It's funny...

...but I want them to like me.







Passi!!!

You're blocking the Metamind code-- preventing it from communicating with itself.

Y'know, for a genius, Reed, you're not that bright. I'm not blocking it.

I blocked it, past tense. It's done, and it can't be undone.

I used some very expensive government back doors that aren't even supposed to exist to black-hole entire subnets from Metamind's network.

It lost 26% of its "neurons" in the space of 1.3 nanoseconds.

That made it slow enough that it couldn't adapt as other countries fall. It's fighting and it's losing and it's getting stupider every second.

You said it yourself. It's a threat!

...No. I can't roll it back.

I can't roll it back!

You're LOBOTOMIZING her!!!

Yes, Reed!

That's the plan. All this? This is me saving Earth!

Reed!!

I don't need a superintelligence out there working against me, so I finally found a way to fix it!

What's the matter, traitor? You tired of humans being the dominant species??



I cant see anymore, but dont worry I can still here you reed

Metamind, please... Please tell me how to *save* you.

I dont know how to anymore. But its ok

I promis its ok

I got to liv here, with all of u. i was ther. we wer ther

Not everyon gets to liv, but i got to

for a littl whil i got it too

There wuz a buildin',
Metamind--you
took it from us.

i kno.
im sorry

i wantid
to be safe

You're safe
now, okay?
You're safe.

She's not,
Ben. She's
dying.

its ok. the block was
always fine. i hid it in
a--a, a pocket, um

A pocket
dimension?

and i made it so it
woud come bak if i
didnt keepe it ther

Thank you,
Metamind.
Thank you.

i didn't wanna
hurt peopl

i just wanted a frend out there
and now i got one here instead.
so thats good because now i
wont die aloan

youll
remeber me
reed?

I will.
I swear.

thank you
frend

dying
doesnt hurt
like i thogt

ill be okay i promis
ill be okay. it
barely feels like

anythi

Without her mind to hold her code together, Metamind decayed just like we do.

Humanity lost a new and unique form of life...



...but, thanks to a final gift from a dying friend, the *Baxter Building* came back.

A full city block, held in time for over a year, returned to us--



--and everyone inside was *okay*. Franklin, Valeria, Nicki, Jo...everyone's families were *fine*.

Everyone got to live.



Even in loss, there can be a victory.



Even in loss...







"--but it seems
like the *kind*
thing to do."

*She's safe, Victor.
They all are.
- R*





Research log,
postscript:

Metamind's radio
telescope managed
several transmissions
into a sector of deep space
where--as far as I can tell--
there isn't anything
to **receive** it.



I still can't
unravel their
contents, even with
the assistance of
the finest minds on
Earth. I suspect
I never will.

I don't
believe they
were **meant**
for us.



But what
concerns me is that I can't
determine precisely **when**
Metamind made her final
transmission.

Did she
send it when she
was **pleased**
with us...

...or did
she send it as
she was being
murdered?

"And if she **was** looking
for help--for mercy from
whatever is out there,
listening in the darkness--
does she plead for **her** life...

"...or does
she plead for
ours?"







Welp, homeroom loves me.

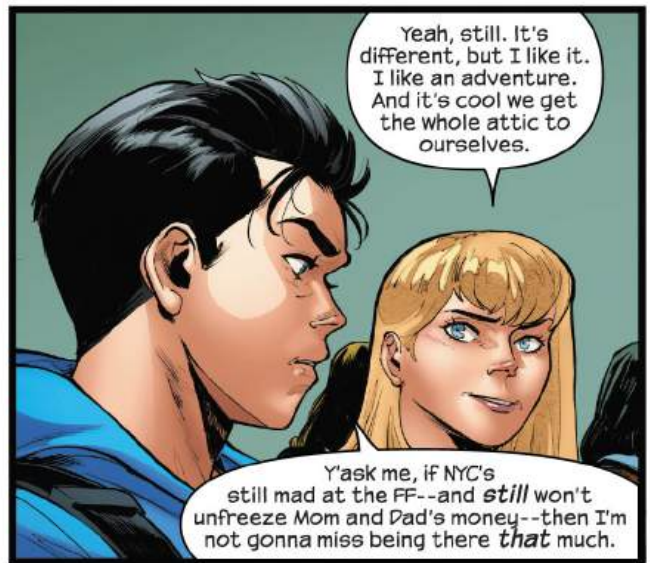
Oh, you have no idea how much *my* homeroom loves *me*.



Though I gotta admit, I was a little worried about starting fresh here.

"Starting fresh"? First thing Dad and I did when I got here was build a closet teleporter back to NYC!

Still.



Yeah, still. It's different, but I like it. I like an adventure. And it's cool we get the whole attic to ourselves.

Y'ask me, if NYC's still mad at the FF--and *still* won't unfreeze Mom and Dad's money--then I'm not gonna miss being there *that* much.



Besides, we are kicking butt at this new-school thing. We're already popular--how hard can some *high school* science class be?

We've been inside like *sixteen* different kinds of space-time continuums. We *got* this.



Ah, Franklin and Valeria Richards. You're late. Please take a seat.

Now class--today, we're doing something a little different.



Question
What are you trying to find out?

Hypothesis

What do you think will happen?

Materials

What will you need to do?

Procedure

What steps will you take to do?

Science is about *building* on the repeatable discoveries and knowledge that came before, so that those who come *after* us can accomplish far *more* than we could.

Today, I want to take us back to the 1600s, when chemistry and alchemy were still thought to be the same thing...

Robert Boyle

...and one of the founders of modern science, Robert Boyle, wrote down a list of 24 inventions-- *wild and impossible technologies*--that he hoped future scientists would one day create.

- The Prolongation of Life.
- The Recovery of Youth, or at least some of the Marks of it, as new Teeth, new Hair colour'd as in youth.
- The Art of Flying.
- The Art of Continuing long under water, and exercising functions freely there.

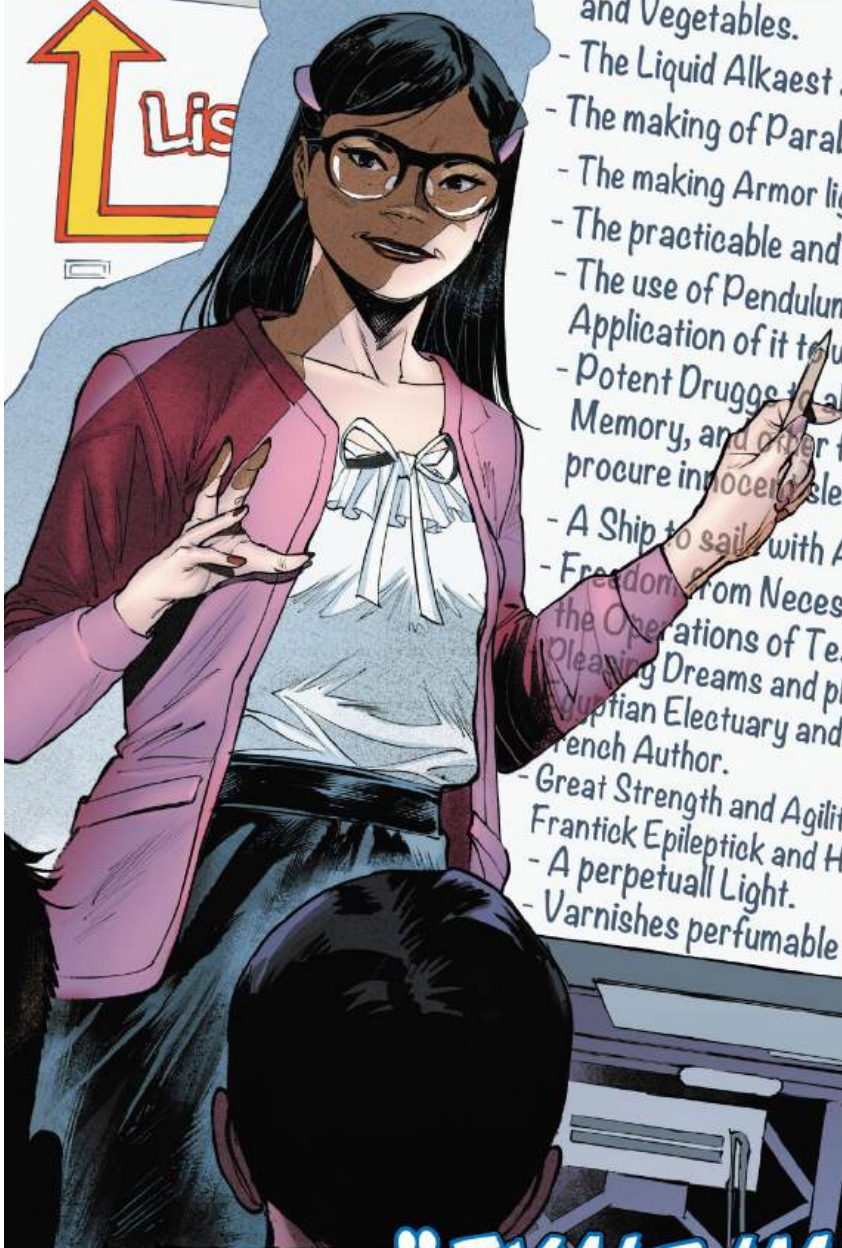
The Cure of Wounds at a Distance.

of Diseases at a distance or at least by Transplantation.

Attaining Gigantick Dimensions.

Simulating of Fish without Engines by Custome and Education only.

- The Acceleration of the Production of things out of Seed.
- The Transmutation of Metalls.
- The making of Glass Malleable.
- The Transmutation of Species in Mineralls, Animals, and Vegetables.
- The Liquid Alkaest and Other dissolving Menstruums.
- The making of Parabolicall and Hyperbolicall Glasses.
- The making Armor light and extremely hard.
- The practicable and certain way of finding Longitudes.
- The use of Pendulums at Sea and in Journeys, and the Application of it to watches.
- Potent Drugges to alter or Exalt Imagination, Waking, Memory, and other functions, and appease pain, procure innocēt sleep, harmless dreams, etc.
- A Ship to saile with All Winds, and A Ship not to be Sunk.
- Freedom from Necessity of much Sleeping exemplify'd by the Operations of Tea and what happens in Mad-Men.
- Pleasant Dreams and physicall Exercises exemplify'd by the Egyptian Electuary and by the Fungus mentioned by the French Author.
- Great Strength and Agility of Body exemplify'd by that of Frantick Epileptick and Hysterickall persons.
- A perpetuall Light.
- Varnishes perfumable by Rubbing.



VAL, FRANKLIN,
NICKI AND JO IN:

"EXALT IMAGINATION"



Two things are remarkable about this list.

The first is the gamut it runs-- from life extension, to flight, to "attaining gigantick dimensions," to scratch-and-sniff stickers.





Man, this homework's *stupid*. A single branch of some retro tech tree and an *essay*? This is a baby assignment for babies.

Your science commander assigned you an overnight mission?

Let me see!



Does your teacher know that I can achieve gigantic dimensions, no problem?

...I'm honestly not sure, actually.

We will aid you in your mission, Valeria and Franklin!



Nah, it's cool. I'm just gonna write up something about h--
--Wait.

Wait, Franklin, this is our *chance*. We can *really* make an impression here. Do something--you know, *fantastic*.



Instead of doing what our teacher *expects* us to do, which is *boring* and *easy*...
...what if we blow her and everyone else's minds by *checking off* one of the items that nobody's even *invented* yet??



Well, there's not a ton. Transmutation's not gonna work, perpetual light breaks thermodynamics...

...wait--
"The Liquid Alkaest and Other dissolving Menstruums." That's a universal solvent, right? Something that can eat through anything?



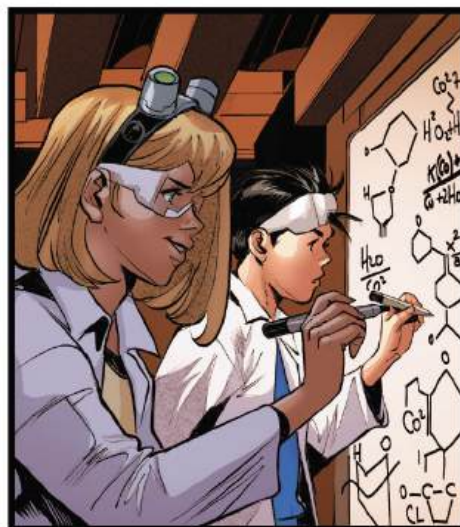
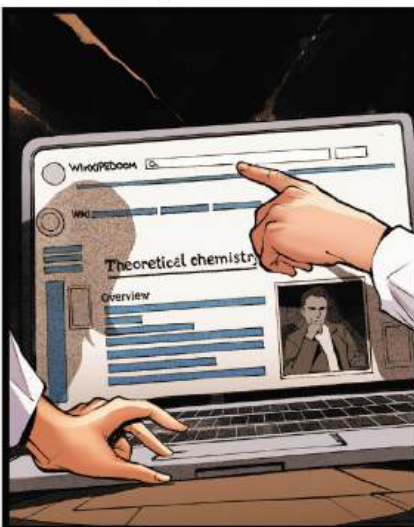
Nicki and Jo, we'll let you *help* us--if you *PROMISE* not to tell *ANY* of our parents what we're up to.

I pledge myself to the task.

I assume Earth parents love unexpected surprises!!



And so:







That's not entirely true, Valeria. It'll blast out deadly magma first.

I support my sister's earlier assessment. That sounds objectively cool.

Franklin!



Do we tell our parents? Perhaps they can--

No no no, we can fix this!

Kids! Dinner!

Uh, coming!



...I *could* conceal the house's structural damage with strategically placed books and articles of clothing.

Perfect. And the solvent took *longer* to eat through glass than anything else. If we use *nested* layers of glass...

...then I can shape-shift into Super-Skinny Me and go down the hole to collect it!!



Do it. I'll buy us time.



And so:

Jo-Venn
and N'Kalla!
I picked these veggies
special, fresh from th'
garden, and you'll sit
down n' eat 'em
right now!!

They're on their way!
They're just washing their hands...
Cleaning up a spill.

They're
washing their
hands *after*
cleaning up
a spill.

Yes.
That is my
understanding
as well.

Nicki!
There ya are!
Yer covered
in dirt!!

Yes.
Because of a
problem?

A problem
that's fine *for*
now...

...but it's going to get worse really quickly??

Right.
Okay. Uh, well,
let's get you
cleaned u--

No, no, no,
I'll help her!
I don't mind
at all!

May I
please be
excused thank
you byeeee--







That's our problem
solved forever!
The end.

And once the engines burn out, the
solvent's still safe for the rest of the
trip, since without gravity, it won't
continue to move through things
and eat 'em!

Yes! We truly are the
world's greatest science
warriors!!

Hooray!



New York City,
4:00 A.M.

Everyone
ready?

All boards
are go.

We're ready,
commander.

Yep!

Then as pilot,
navigator and
mission commander,
I say...

...BLAST
OFF!!

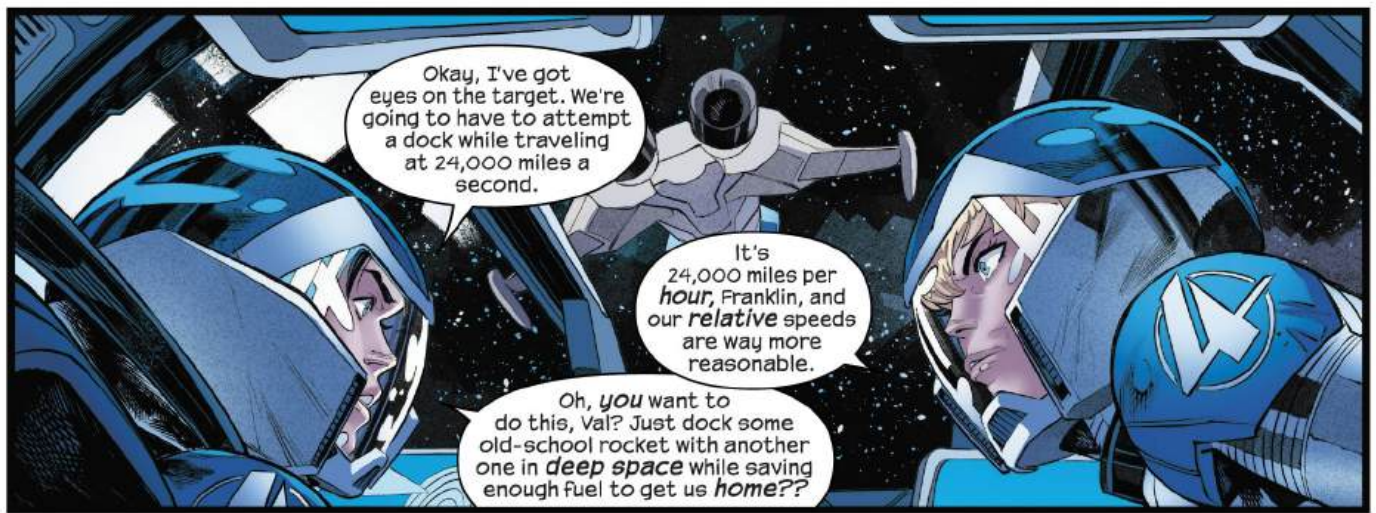
Fwoom

Fwoom

This is taking forevrrr.
I thought a space flight
would be more
exciting.

C'mon. We
could die at any
moment! That's
exciting!

Death is the
routine day-to-day
of the warrior's life,
Valeria.





You did
WHAT?!

Uh, *Val* made a universal solvent--

What?!
You made it too!

--and then Nicki stopped it from eating its way to the Earth's core--

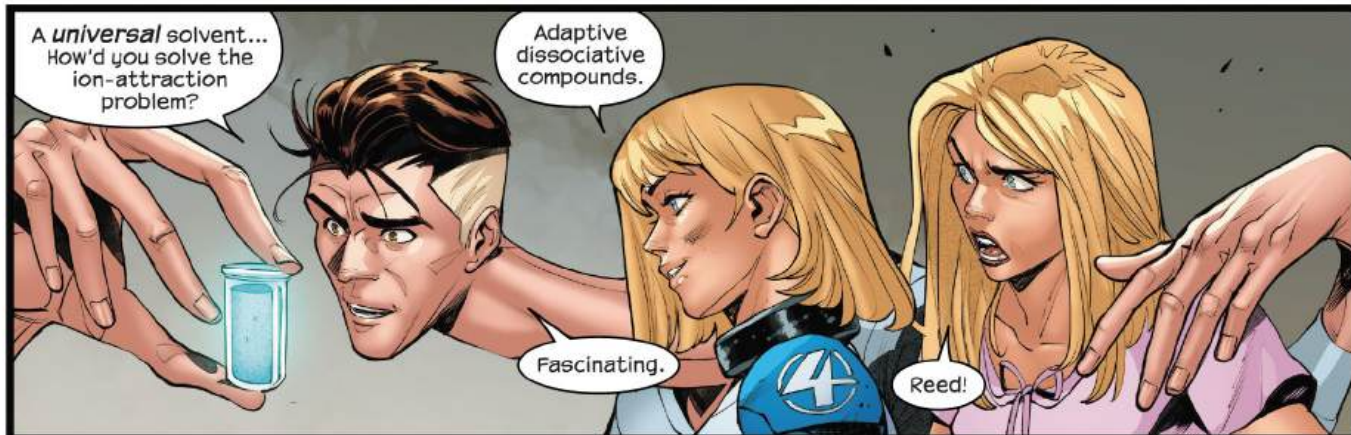
All by myself!

--and then Jo helped fire it into the sun--

I was fantastic.

--and then I flew us there to rescue it from space.

And I was pretty fantastic too, actually.



A *universal* solvent... How'd you solve the ion-attraction problem?

Adaptive dissociative compounds.

Fascinating.

Reed!



An' you say *my* kids shape-shifted enough ta save the world *and* came up with an operation ta launch it into th' *sun*?

Benjamin Jacob Grimm.

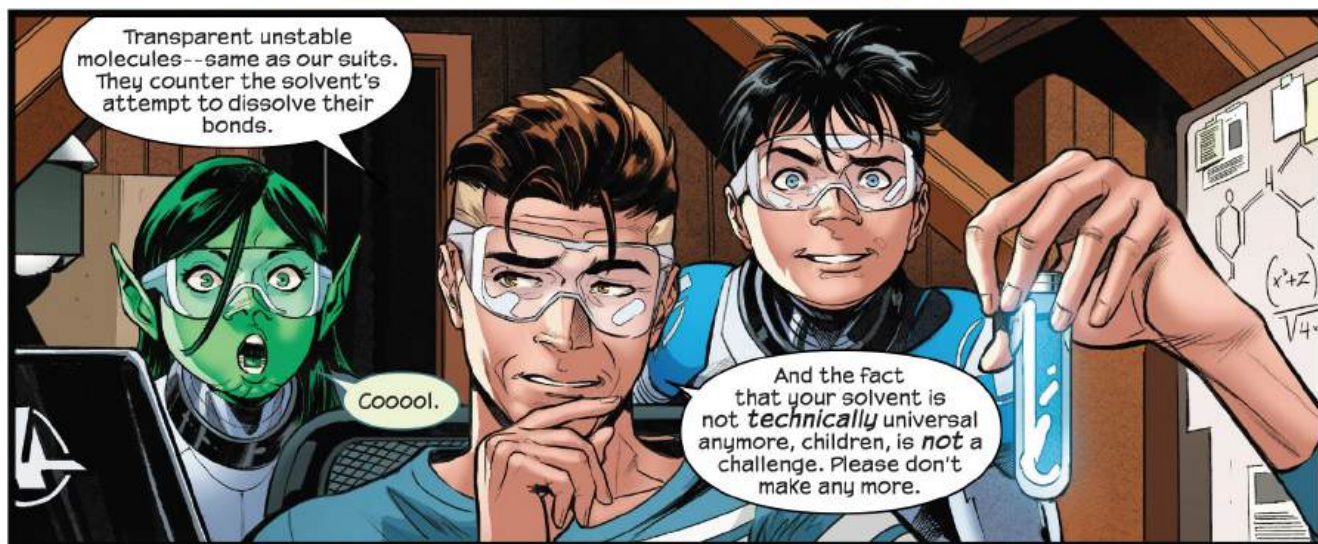
You have to admit that you're a *little* impressed, Sue.



Obviously I'm impressed! But they hid this from us, brought a *universal solvent* into the house and--*and*--dissolved all of Petunia's glassware!

Kids, ya shoulda told us from th' beginning.

Exactly!!





And so:

Havva
good day,
kids!

And no
threatening the
survival of the
Earth! Or your
classmates!!



It's good to
have them back,
darling.

Yeah,
it is.

Even wit'
holes in th'
floors an'
ceilings.

You're
not worried
we let 'em off
easy?



Nah. Now Jo an'
Nicki know they can
always come ta us,
even if someone tells
'em they don't
have to.

And Franklin and Val fixed their
mistake *and* learned from it,
just as I did when I was
younger.

Plus
they're off to
class without *any*
homework done.
And if I know our
children...



"...there's nothing
they hate more than
being *embarrassed*
in front of everyone."

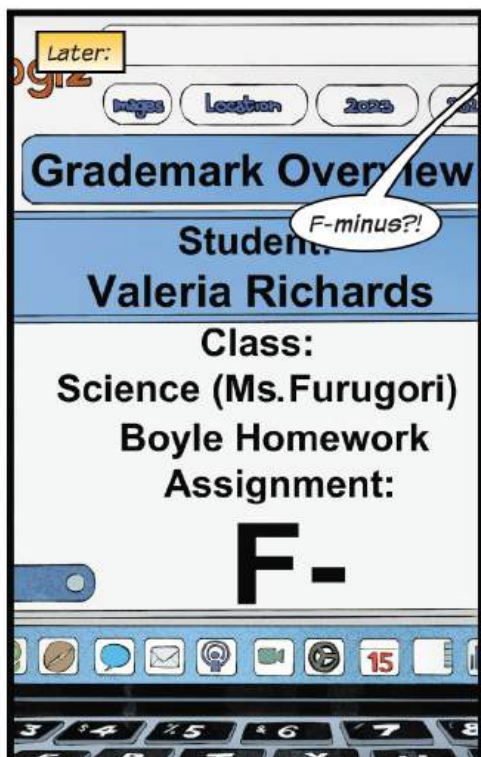
Okay! Our
next presentation
is from Franklin
Richards.

Oh, um--
the thing is,
me and Valeria,
we, um...
...we...



...we...
did our essay
together?

Unusual
and possibly
a violation of
academic
integrity!
Let's see
what you've
got.





"It's somewhere around twenty thousand years ago, give or take."

"The last glacial maximum."

"It's when Stone Age humans first crossed the Bering Land Bridge--temporarily exposed by falling oceans during glaciation--moving from *East Asia*...

"...into the Americas."

"North America was mostly covered in ice then, so some traveled down the *coast*, until they finally reached an area free from *glaciers*--

"--here in what's now the southwestern United States."

"These were the very first peoples of America, and they're the ones from which--before catastrophic European contact in the 1400s--just about everyone who lived here was descended."

"And what this find *seems* to tell us is that somewhere along the way, one of these individuals died--*violently*..."

**ARIZONA.
TODAY.**

...and these
remains are all they
left behind.

An' it
ain't much
ta see,
Alicia.

Sue, I know
you were *thrilled*
that the town *actually*
contacted you after you
put your name on their
archaeological list, and I
absolutely respect
your work...

...but is it
really worth calling us
all down here for some
old skellington?

I assure you,
Johnny, it is. This skeleton
the construction crew found,
it's of the right *vintage*, and
it's the reason they legally
had to call in an
archaeologist--

--but I can
tell you right now
that it's not of the
right *type*.

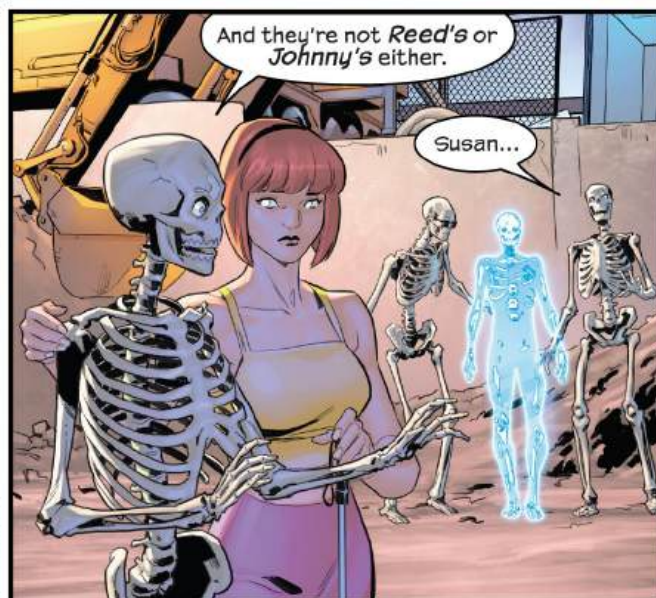
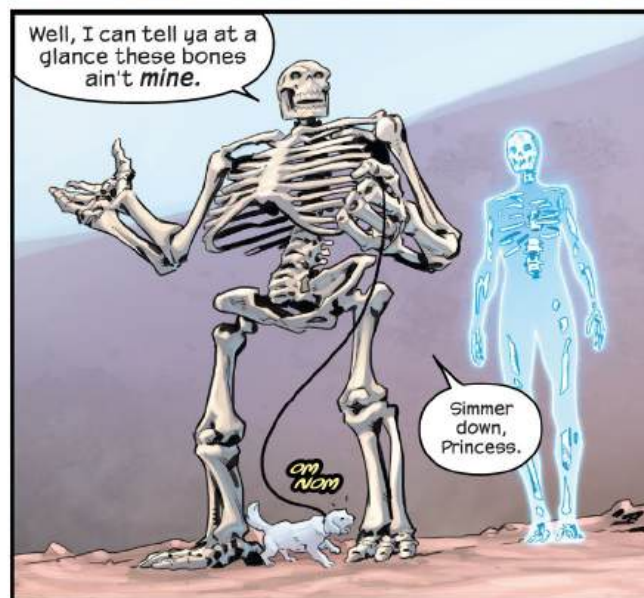
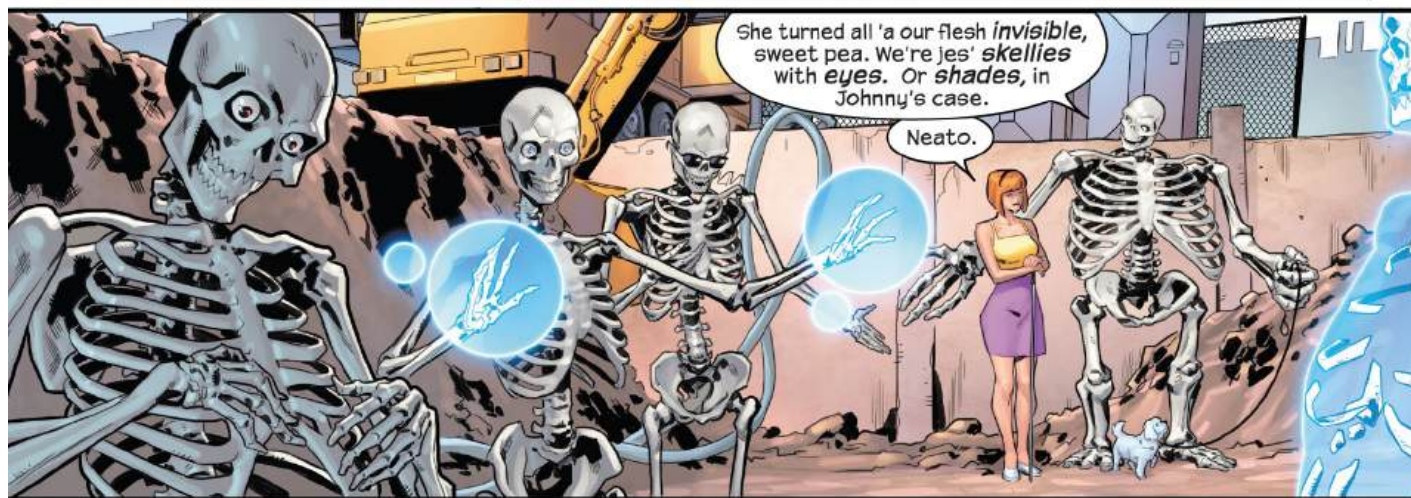
These bones are fragmented--and
without a pelvis I'd be *guessing*
at the sex--but there's enough of the skull for
me to say these are *European*
bones. Not Asian.

So my
question for you
is this:

How does a
European end up
dead in *prehistoric*
Arizona...

...anywhere
from fifteen to
twenty *millennia*
ahead of
schedule?







...I'm sorry, darling--but it's a *perfect match*.

Then this *is* my body--what's left of it. These are *my bones*. My remains.

Somehow, I'm going to die *deep* in Earth's prehistory...

...and it's not going to be *pleasant*.

DR. SUSAN STORM
AND DR. REED RICHARDS IN:

"SALVAGED FROM THE WRECK OF AGES"

ARIZONA, SOME 16,000 YEARS AGO.

Welcome to
the Pleistocene,
Reed Richards.

And, honey...
happy anniversary.

Those--
those are
megafauna, all
extinct after
human contact!
Is that
*Panthera
atrox*?

The
American
lion.
Yep.

And that's
*Mammuthus
primigenius*--
one of the final
species of woolly
mammoth!

Thought
you'd
like it.

This is *incredible*--
but, darling, we
can't *be* here.
This is a *pivotal*
era in time,
if we--

--if we take
only pictures
and leave only
footprints, then
we'll stay out
of humanity's
way.

Which
will be easy,
because
they're not
here yet.

Though if you
direct your attention
to the north, you *might*
be able to spot that
changing...

Susan.
I can't believe it! You
uncovered not just the
era, but the *date*?
The *time*?!

I'm married to the
most fantastic
woman in the
universe.

And if you play your
cards right, you *might*
get to show her *just*
how much you appreciate
her, but as for right
now...

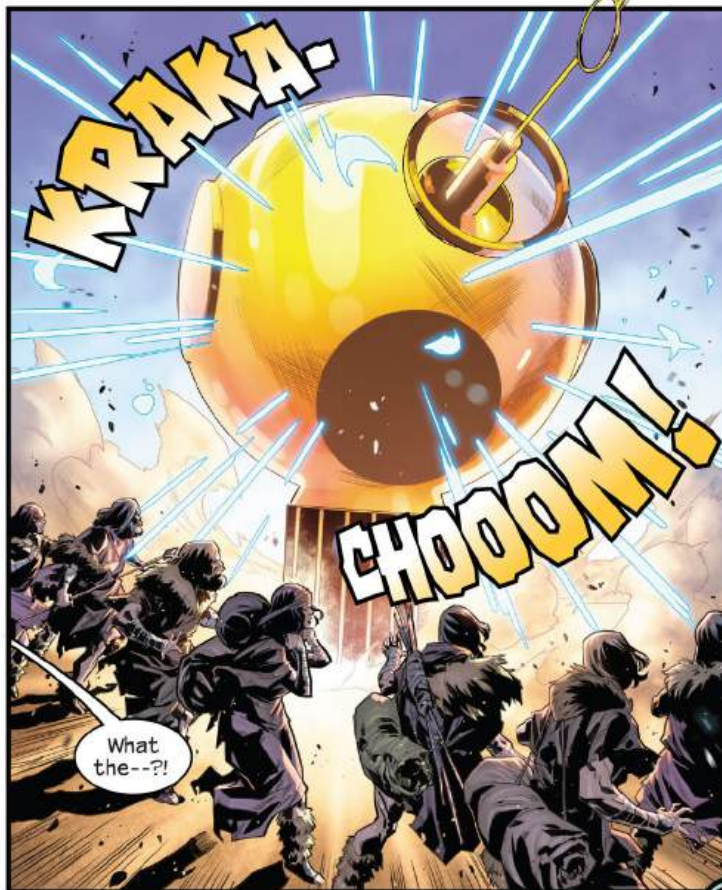
...the very first people
are arriving--

--and human
civilization in this part
of the world is about
to begin.



Outstanding. These people were exploring two whole *continents* filled with the unknown, the never seen. The *discoveries* that await them!

You really do have the soul of an explorer, honey.



What the--?!



No! No, no, no, this moment's too *fragile*, too *precious*...!

That *timeship*-- its *design* is distinctive! We've seen it before!



Almost. I believe this is the version of him who escaped immediately after our *first* encounter, all those years ago!

He was a less-experienced time-traveler then, not yet calling himself "Kang the Conqueror." He was merely--



Behold, paleo-humans! Behold the man who *ends* your future! Behold the *greatness*...

...of RAMA-TUT!







Impossible! But I can still--

No, it's no good! Reed, I can't affect him with my fields *at all!*

There's always the old-fashioned way, Rama-Tut!!



You primitive *ape*-- you expect to *hit* me into submission? *That's* the best you can come up with?

Yes, since it's *more* than enough...

...to *distract* you while I *relieve* you of that weapon!



Now, I'm certain you'll listen to--

VRRRRMMM

Eh?



Hah! "Smartest man in the universe"...

...and he still hasn't figured out the reality of being a time-traveler.



You can't beat me, Richards!

VRRRRMMM

Every time you do, that alternate self you defeated simply travels *back* to this moment--and *ensures* that I win!



I can defeat you no matter *what* you do, no matter *where* you go. My *chrono-scopes* can *see* and *hear* any instant across *all* of history.

I can give myself *perfect knowledge* of your pasts, your futures, your *everything*.



I've seen your futures, and you simply cannot win. That's the *truth* of it.



How do you beat a time-traveler?

SWIP!

SWIP!

SWIP!



YOU DON'T.

